GENDER AND CULTURAL STUDIES IN AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

From History to Herstory

Culture, Gender and Religion in Archival Material in Southern Africa

Edited by Paul Leshota · Maxwell Musingafi
Itumeleng Mokhele · Makhulu Makumane

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Gender and Cultural Studies in Africa and the Diaspora

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To all the departed, the living and the future whimpering and toiling mothers and women of Africa whose herstories *have been ignored by mainstream European and African historical archive.*

Foreword

Culture, gender and religion are fundamental in building tolerant societies that are guided by Botho/Ubuntu principles for sustainable livelihoods. Examples of female leadership excellence abound in Southern Africa historical accounts excluded from bias-ridden historical narratives. Attempts by writers such as Credo Mutwa's "Indaba, My Children: African Tribal History, Legends, Customs and Religious Beliefs" did not enjoy the same fame as those by Western writers in the curriculum.

This book emerges at a critical time when the world grapples with uncertainty about culture, gender and religion in Southern Africa as well as globally. The book encourages a Sankofaist approach to demystify the current human experience, glean kernels wisdom from the past and bench mark the future on indigenous knowledge systems. Global knowledge construction is warming up to indigenous knowledge systems for epistemic justice. However, deeper illumination of the role played by gender and religion within African cultures remains largely unexplored.

Southern Africa is home to pre-colonial, non-patriarchal, Bantu matriarchal systems that deliberately recognised the power of women in building societies. The authors of the chapters in the book share insider insights of the understanding of Southern African cultures, gender and religions. The historiographical stance of the book balances the hegemonic misinformation about the psychobiographical accounts of leadership in Southern Africa. Women leadership as key players who executed skills a competences today's leaders could learn from was put under a knowledge construction bushel. The book provides the reader with more authentic accounts of historical events that shaped an inclusive Africa for equitable existence.

The voices of women represented in this book re-claim their space in playing a critical role to re-direct society towards Southern Africa that respects and cherishes human beings for who they are without discrimination. This book is a critical analysis of archival accounts that can be used to guide today's leadership in public affairs, especially leadership by women. The experiences of women as guided by cultures in Southern Africa are the oasis for the knowledge drought engulfing today's societies. The book makes a clarion call towards cessation of gender-based violence, respect for women and children, as well as grooming boys who will cherish and protect female members of their societies. The historical success stories of many women in Southern Africa are used as lens through which we must interpret contemporary challenges still experienced by women.

This book will be very useful for the reincarnation of Southern African balanced understanding of culture, gender and religion. The book would be a critical reference for historians, policy makers, curriculum developers, teachers, guidance counsellors, traditional practitioners, leadership academies, career coaches and University lecturers. The chapters have great potential to revisit African Religions and counterbalance them with Euro-Western religions to draw lessons that will be relevant for African contexts.

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Acknowledgement

The writing of this book would not have been possible without the inspiration of and the call to arise by Musa Dube, the Continental coordinator of the Circle of African Women Theologians. She has always made it her business to develop productive African women scholarship in keeping with the vision of the founder of the Circle, Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Today we look with pride at the matriarchs of the Circle and the blossoming generation of the young scholars, women and men, who are keeping the vision of "men's freedom means nothing if women are not free." The latter are the rising stars of the Circle, who had always wanted to make their voices heard through writing and publishing but only needed a requisite gentle nagging to do it. Musa did not only inspire, she went and extra-mile to mentor and wave on the aspiring and promising scholars of our generation, particularly women and men who support women's struggle for the emancipation of all of us. These men and women constitute the majority of contributors of chapters in this volume.

When the idea of coordinating the writing of a book was conceived, Musa Dube did not hesitate to provide the counsel and the tools of trade. The team of editors, put up to coordinate this work, have made this daunting task look manageable. Their readiness and willingness to go beyond the call of duty has been the single memory that will be treasured for the rest of our lives. From the preparation of the concept, to the invitation of scholars as well as the coordination and constant nudging of the writers to submit, the experience was onerous but rewarding.

We most sincerely thank all the authors of chapters in the book for accepting our invitation to collaborate. Bringing together some of the best

scholars in Southern Africa and beyond, to share their reflections and well researched chapters, has been a humbling experience. Academics are by nature very busy, always caught up in the trade of administration, research, teaching and community service. There is never a time when they are not doing any of the above, let alone, sparing some time for God and their families. Despite the dearth of time, they made it their duty to reflect seriously on the conditions surrounding women in Southern Africa so as to add their voices in the ensuing debate about the status of women in the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial spaces and to subject them to a medley of theoretical frameworks and optics. To all of them we are most grateful. Professor Monaheng Sefotho has always been inspirational to the publication efforts undertaken at the National University of Lesotho. His readiness to write a foreword for this publication is acknowledged with a profound sense of gratitude and appreciation.

Last but not least are the voices that always willingly and freely share their stories without demanding anything from us. The men and women who participated in the writing of these chapters through sharing their stories and experiences have brought to life the fragments of our past to enlarge the kaleidoscope of women's heroic escapades in the building of their own communities. Our most sincere appreciation to your willingness to journey with us as we endeavour to rise and tell Southern African women's stories. We say to you all, "*Vive les femmes*!"

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Abbreviations

AD	Alliance of Democrats
ANC	African National Congress
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BMZ	Bantu Matrilineal Zone
BNP	Basutoland National Party Africa Company
BSAC	British South Africa Company
COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
DC	Democratic Congress
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food Agricultural Organisation
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
MEC	Movement for Economic Change
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola
NECC	National Emergency Command Centre
NESAM	Nucleo dos Estudantes Africanos Secondarios de Mocambique
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMDS	National Manpower Development Secretariat
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OMM	Organisation of Mozambican Women
OPO	Ovamboland People's Organisation
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PAIGC	Partito Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Mission Society

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRT	Social Role Theory
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TANU	Tanganyika African National Congress
UK	United Kingdom
UNIP	United National Independence Party
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Culture, Gender and Religion in Archival Material

Paul Leshota

1.1 Introduction

Culture, Gender and Religion in the Archival Material in Southern Africa: From History to Herstory is an initiative that is aligned to the vision and mission of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The Circle, as it is normally called, commits to fighting all forms of oppression including patriarchy, anthropocentrism, racism, gender, homophobia, class, among many other issues. The *Culture, Gender and Religion in the Archival Material in Southern Africa* project is a research work focused mainly on excavating the untold stories of women heroines in Southern Africa. It exposes the lopsided manner in which history in its broader sense has been written by white, European males, enjoying as it were the privilege to name, define, construct and direct the course of history. The anonymous adage goes that, "History is written by Victors." Indeed, those who have the privilege of a scribe write what they want to write in their unique voice and from their own perspective and not merely copying

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others' work. One renowned British historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper, is quoted as saying, "Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present, there is none; only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness." (Mazrui, 1978, p. 94).

The above two citations point to the power enjoyed by an author who is not only an ideological product but also a bearer of the same ideology through a different voice (Rabinow, 1984). In that capacity, s/he enjoys the privilege to name, define, and construct as well as direct the course of history. It was as products of imperialist culture and ideology that white male Europeans, both colonialists and missionaries, authored hundreds of African, anthropological, historical and archival materials, narratives and books on culture and religion from their own perspective and judging Africa and all its genius on their own terms. It was history not told as it was but as (white) men saw it (Cheater, 1986; Zungu et al., 2014). Misconceptions, myths and prejudices had been carefully crafted and nurtured to advance European and white-male cultural, economic, political and religious interests (Poulsen, 1981). In that process women, though quite present and active, were intentionally left out of the written African historical archive, something that gave traction to what Moagi and Mtombeni (2020) call gender oppression school of historical analysis which confined pre-colonial African women to the domestic space.

This book, therefore, goes to the heart of the African historical archival and oral sources that were muzzled and/or misrepresented by the Eurocentric power of a scribe and allows Southern African women to re-write *theirstories* of gender relations in Southern Africa. In this way this book will also speak to the United Nations Sustainable Development goals, especially SDGs 5 and 10 on gender equality as well as reduction of gender inequalities, as well as Agenda 2063, *The Africa we want*, in its aspirations, particularly Aspirations #4, 5 and 6 which converge on gender equality, people driven development, especially women, read within the wider framework of African heritage, values and ethics (Agenda, 2063).

1.2 Situating the Debate in Context: Oral Traditions and Archival Material

Before colonisation, nations around the world passed on their culture and memory from one generation to the next through oral means (Turin, 2013). Vijayakumari (2018) writing from the context of India, concurs

that, in addition to being the repository of critical knowledge, philosophy, wisdom, culture, memory as well as artistic expression of society, oral tradition was also one of the important resources in the construction and re-construction of history. It further distils what Scheub (1985), reflecting from an African context, calls the essence of human experiences, creating out of them images that can be easily retrieved and remembered. Oral tradition unfolds through "stories, tales, songs, myths, legends to explain the work of gods … as well as the working of the whole world and universe." (Gill, 2017, p. 528). They depended for the most part on the performer's ability to work with words to fit specific occasions. In this regard, Africa was no exception. The rendition, as Finnegan (2016) suggests, was critical for the existence and effectiveness of the oral transmission. In this way, culture, arts, religion, emotions, ideas and traditions of the people, as well as their meanings, were preserved and disseminated to inform their lives.

Its benefits notwithstanding, the advent of colonisation brought with it a number of challenges which undermined the indigenous manner of communication and preservation of customs, traditions and rituals. Accessible to the colonisers and missionaries, during this time, was the culture of writing which was utilised to generate documents and archive memories through written documentation and pictures. According to Mazrui (1985) archives were, in the main, preoccupied with record keeping of the information that would otherwise be lost through amnesia. The colonisers and missionaries, with their culture of writing, had this archiving facility which they used to capture and preserve the past. Through its introduction, not only was the importance of oral tradition eroded but its effectiveness as a source was undermined. It needs to be said that some of this material thus written and archived had a lot of distortions and misrepresentations about Africa and its people (Barton, 1865), particularly because it was written from a Eurocentric, white male perspective with his interests well secured. These documents and archives, however, remain an important resource for research on the social construction of gender relations particularly in the pre-colonial and colonial times.

1.3 Gender, Culture and Religion

For the longest time a narrative has been peddled to the effect that gender oppression in Africa, specifically, women oppression by men, predates colonialism and has been carried over to the present in a different form

(Guy, 1990). The paucity of both written literature on the role of women in pre-colonial Africa has gone to reinforce a myth that women have no history. Ogbomo and Ogbomo (1993) argue that this view was sustained by the tendencies of some authors to write history backwards. The latter authors posit that, "since women are oppressed today, they must have been even more so in the past" (Ogbomo & Ogbomo, 1993, p. 431). This view went unchallenged for quite some time and morphed into what came to be known as the gender oppression school of historical analysis. According to this view, pre-colonial African women were confined to the domestic space and were oppressed by their men (Moagi & Mtombeni, 2020). It has to be said though that this is not the latter's position but that it is the premise upon which their challenge of uncritical attribution of women oppression by men way before colonialism, is founded. The above discussions make sense within the context where Africa was seen as either devoid of any form of civilisation or at least the crude form not worthy of any serious systematic study (Finnegan, 2016). It is sad to say that this view still has currency today, though in a more diminished form.

This manner of projecting a specific notion about Africa has not only incapacitated it but it has also forced Africa's historical, archaeological, oral sources into hiding. Coupled with the pressure at the point of contact between the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial, not all was as smooth as one would have wished as each era exerted undue pressure on the social and economic conditions of the subsequent generations. The African Culture and Religion were portrayed as primitive, savage and pagan and anything associated with them was equally debased.

Gender is one of the most widely researched terms in modern scholarship. Despite the scholarly interest it has attracted, it remains a fluid and highly contested term which cannot be reduced to only one definition. It is distinguished from sex, which is biological while gender is viewed as a social construct that has been mistakenly associated with women. Though it could be traced back to the 1950s with associations to Johns Hopkins scholars, it was given a more psychological and cultural connotation by Robert Stoller in his book *Sex and Gender* (1968). The seminal work of Joan Scott, *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis* (1986) took the discussion to another level by staging a platform for rigorous engagement of gender as an analytic category. In her view, gender consists of two interrelated but analytically distinct parts, namely (1) social relationships based on perceived sex differences and (2) relationships of power (1986). Her concern was more about building core gender identity through

drawing a sharp distinction between femaleness and maleness (sex) on one hand and femininity and masculinity (gender) on the other (Meyerowitz, 2008) in an effort to rectify what she considered sexual aberrations in people.

Subsequent studies on gender, nuanced though, did not depart much from this line of thought. Despite the many definitions that have seen the light of day, gender refers, for the most part, to a socially constructed relationship based on perceived differences between sexes, signifying relationships of power (Meyerowitz, 2008). Culture and religion do not only intersect, but they have played a catalytic role in shaping gender and gender roles in societies. They have been labelled a double-edged sword by Chitando and Chirongoma (2012). They reinforce and reify gender discourses while enjoying a potential to positively impact the same gender discourses. Both culture and religion remain formidable resources for supporting gender inequality. Hence the need to critically engage them in the deconstruction of harmful gender practices and relationships.

While acknowledging the systematic marginalisation of women's voices and identities by scribal patriarchy, the aim of this book is to bring to life women's experiences and voices through critical engagement of sources of knowledge available to Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular. The volume will further comb through the anthropological, historical, religious, literary, mythological, educational, indigenous scientific material with a view to exhume the contributions and heroism of women in the building of their own societies. It will further reflect on the current experiences of women in the educational, religious, political and scientific sphere in an effort to measure the extent to which there is progress on the gender equality trajectory in Southern Africa.

In that way, through linking the past with the present, the various chapters of this book will contribute to the debate on gender equality and women empowerment within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 as well as Agenda 2063, *The Africa we Want*. This volume, therefore, proposes to be a journey from pre-colonial *herstory* to colonial *history* and back to postcolonial *herstory* where the struggles of a Southern African woman will be scoured from oral literature and the archives and other sources; interrogated by predominantly Southern African women within a wider scope of various fields of study. The end result will be to rectify the misrepresented, underrepresented and flawed *herstory* of Southern Africa from the point of view of women as well as recording and archiving the largely untold micro-*herstories* of the heroines

of Southern Africa. To that end this book is divided into three parts each focusing on a specific historical epoch: pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods.

1.4 Gender Relationships in the Pre-colonial Southern Africa

The place and role of a woman in pre-colonial Africa remains a highly contested subject in modern scholarship. For some, representations of male and female relationships, among others, became victim of questionable assumptions made of the so-called savage propensities of the Africans (Finnegan, 2016). This view is supported by Ogbomo (2005) who suggests that the paucity of literature on the role that women played in pre-colonial Africa went to reinforce the myth that women had no history and could not therefore be equated with men. For some, gender relations in Africa were characterised by projecting western-specific notions of difference on other cultures (Amadiume, 2015), while others think gender relations in pre-colonial Africa were quite fluid and depended on the context (Cheater, 1986). All of the above assumptions were cooked at the point of contact between the pre-colonial and colonial periods. It occurs from a number of articles and books written that the gender inequality that is so touted about Africa in the pre-colonial era was an imagination of colonial writers. Mikidady (2022) puts it pointedly that gender inequality is a recent invention that finds no validation in the historical realities of Africa. Amoah-Boampong and Agyeiwaa (2019, 1099) writing from the West African perspective, opines that women in pre-colonial West Africa "contested, negotiated, complemented, and transformed their societies through diverse roles tenable in various spheres of social life. Uzodike and Isike (2012, p. 37) concur that, "African traditional religions conceived the position of women as complementary to that of men."

Southern Africa was not an exception. Various scholars writing from within the Southern African context have weighed in on the ensuing debate on gender relations in the pre-colonial era. With nuanced emphases, Bourdillon (1976), Cheater (1986), Weir (2000), Morrissey (2015), Moagi and Mtombeni (2020), Ndlovu (2021) are at one in their contestation of the view that women were oppressed in pre-colonial Southern Africa. Moagi and Mtombeni (2020) make a compelling case in their chapter, *Women in Pre-colonial Africa: Southern Africa* that sets aside the

longstanding narrative peddled by mainstream Western, male scholarship that in pre-colonial Southern Africa women were marginalised and subordinated to men in a number of social spheres. They are both worried about the invisibility of women stories and herstories in literature. This sad worrisome gap is attributed, for the most part, to the fact that history was "done by men, about men, and for men." (Moagi & Mtombeni, 2020, p. 2). Morrissey (2015, p. 54) drives the point home cogently thus:

> *Often there were no written histories in pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. Histories were remembered orally, but not written down, so stories written by adventurers, colonial officials, and missionaries perpetuated many of the stereotypes and assumptions that Europeans in Africa held in early written histories. No alternative written history existed to counter or correct from an African viewpoint. Researchers working on pre-colonial and early colonial African history must therefore rely on written documents produced in a highly biased context. Such narratives, while problematic in themselves, can still permit us to reassess the peoples they depict with a more nuanced sensitivity to the fluidity of gender roles, and a more nuanced awareness of the nature of political power structures.*

In fact, as it has been argued, women were as present and influential in politics, religion and family affairs as their male counterparts in differing degrees depending on the society. Some scholars with a Western background tend to attach importance to property and land as a determinant of power and influence. Their conclusion, which is biased, is that because women could not own property and/or work the land then that meant they were subordinated to men.

1.5 Gender Relations during Colonial Times in Southern Africa

The idea of Africa, in its identities and relationships, is a result of complex discursive processes involving both "externally-generated discourses about the continent as well as internally-generated paradigms and politics" which led to its construction (Zeleza, 2006, p. 14). Though one cannot blame colonisation alone for this status quo, it has, together with its twin imperialism, "[seen] white races scrambling and partitioning the African continent among European powers galvanized by the Berlin Conference of

1884–1885. Colonialism was a racial affair through and through, with white races ruling over black ones". (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 103).

In its wake colonisation, through the explorers, travellers, cartographers, colonialists and missionaries, did not leave anything unchanged. The culture, the language, the mind, the relations, politics and economics, were profoundly affected by the colonial dispensation. It is in this sense that Selerud (2008) says colonialism changed profoundly anything prior to it. Not only did colonisation usher in military artillery to exert their control on the African people and their ability to take control of their lives but it also intentionally interfered with what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) called the contours of the colonial matrix which consisted in the control of economy, control of authority, control of subjectivity and knowledge as well as control of gender and sexuality. The effects of these matrix of power on the African are captured cogently by Fanon (1963, p. 67) thus:

> *Colonialism was never simply contented with imposing of its grammar and logic upon the 'present and the future of a dominated country'. Colonialism was also not simply satisfied with merely holding the colonized people in its grip and emptying 'the native's brain of all form and content'. Rather, 'By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it.*

It is to the distortion, disfigurement and destruction of the *herstorical* narrative that we are interested in and how that affected the gender configurations of the Africans in general and Southern Africa in particular. Selerud (2008, p. 13) adds that, "the notion of male and female spaces too became the victim of European domination." It was more evident in what he calls 'housewifization' of African women. Within and by means of this systematic reconfiguration, the egalitarian role of both men and women in the sphere of production was altered and shifted to men while women were forced to exclusively occupy the domestic sphere. This was further aided by the European legal and educational systems where women were taught home economics, cooking, home crafts and sewing, all of which, in very subtle ways, created a woman who would become a housewife locked in her home. Gender relations that were rather fluid in the pre-colonial era not only received a face-lifting but a soul-lifting operation too through colonial conquest, Christianity and European trade and politics. The new economic, political, cultural and religious landscape that resulted from colonisation impacted on gender relations and resulted in a deterioration

of the position of women in Southern Africa (Becker, 2021). New dynamics emerging out of the interaction between European, colonial modes of production on one side and indigenous structures and philosophies on the other evolved new hybrid forms of domination at all levels of Southern African society.

This perspective is not without nuanced appraisers though. Aina (1998), Tamale (2020) and Rubaya (2021) among others, observe that, in Africa women's struggles against oppression predate colonialism. They converge on the fact that patriarchy has always been part of the pre-colonial order. During this time, it assumed various shapes and forms with one feature in common which is the promotion of male privilege. As they assert, it is not that patriarchy was not there before colonialism, but that the latter worsened African women's experiences. There is a long history of women mobilising to resist patriarchal and political domination in their effort to assert their personal and collective rights. Several legendary women helped transform their societies even before the colonisers set their foot on African soil. Queen Eyleuka of Ethiopia, Queen Lobamba of Congo and the Princess Nang'oma of Uganda are but a few African heroines whose legacy has not been celebrated well enough. Though they are being acclaimed in their own countries, that legacy remains incomplete for the most part because it was *histories* and not *herstories*. It was women stories written or de-written/de-storied by men and not by women themselves.

Southern Africa has been victim to the sweeping and uncritical embrace of the gender oppression narrative which, as Amadiume (2015) observes, was spurred by projecting a very specific, western notion of difference onto other cultures. Nympha and Ngozi (2023) in their recent article entitled, *Wollstonecraft on Patriarchy, the Myth of African Matriarchy and Emancipation of African Women through the SDGs*, believe that denying the fact of pre-colonial African societies being patriarchal is the reason that the ills of patriarchy persist in contemporary African societies. While it is arguable that patriarchy might have been present in some societies, to reduce it to a universal category in form and practice across cultures could be an over-articulation.

Despite the positive gains made from the struggle for independence by the majority of African countries and the concomitant efforts to right the historical misnomers that had been peddled by a mainstream historically white male hegemony, women's voices remained muted by the colonial onslaught on African social and spiritual fabric. What this hegemony

managed to remove was the pre-colonial African legacy of non-rigid gender division of labour and replaced it with the tenets of gender oppression schools of historical analysis (Moagi & Mtombeni, 2020). On the basis of the latter, the gallantry, chivalry, heroism as well as the voices, the stories and the contributions of women by women to the struggles for emancipation from all forms of subordination ranging from slavery, cultural marginalisation, religious ghettoisation and political disenfranchisement, still remained literally low-keyed if not outright muzzled in mainstream historical hegemony. The imperialist literature and historical texts written by white males was an integral part of colonisation which alienated not only African males but also, and especially African women who either are subsumed or absent in the white males versus Africans continuum (Dube, 2000).

1.6 Postcolony and Gender relations in Southern Africa

The first half of the twentieth century marked a turning point in the trend that had predominantly favoured the eurocentric perspective on history, culture and religion. Coinciding with the fight for independence from the colonial rulers, for the majority of African countries, it saw a steady increase in the number of publications written by Africans and from the perspective of Africa, in the areas of culture, history, politics and religion (Mbiti, 1969; Op'Bitek, 1971; Boahan, 1966; Oduyoye, 1989). These publications injected new, improved critical perspectives in various areas and fields previously monopolised by white male writers. The net effect was the removal of the cloak of darkness and savagery over Africa, that had characterised the eurocentric hegemony in the areas of anthropology, culture, history and religion.

The disquiet and rumblings that began to emerge from women's circles for their voices to be heard and their stories to be told and written not only from their perspectives but by women themselves did not come as a surprise. Feminism and womanism in Africa—in all their forms—are located in the continent's historical realities of deception, oppression, betrayal and domination brought about by patriarchy, slave trade, colonialism, racism, neo-colonialism and globalisation. They, therefore, became clear representations of the struggle for women's liberation for their voices to be heard, and for their rights to be recognised and respected.

In the field of religion, particularly imported religion, where women were relegated to the periphery and treated as the last, the least and the lost, the legacy of Mary Daly (1973), Rosemary Radford-Ruether (1977) and Hudson-Weems (1985) in America amongst others and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1995) in Africa pioneered single moments that sparked a revolution, collective actions and creative expressions that changed attitudes and altered the course of history. African women scholars, in the diaspora and in Africa had become aware that white women, despite their good intentions, have not and cannot adequately represent African women as much as African men cannot speak for African women. It was from this elucidation that Mercy Amba Oduyoye got inspiration to carve out a space for African women to tell their own stories in Culture, Religion, Theology and beyond, from their own perspective. While there are a number of significant publications to her credit, her greatest gift to scholarship was the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hitherto, Circle) in 1989.

They crossed colonial borders and boundaries as geographical spaces but also as critical zones for negotiating and reconfiguring what Wang et al. (2013) call historically formed material connections, identities and power relations. Through their efforts old borders were pulled down, bridges built; boundaries crossed and new relationships were forged within the postcolonial context. Beyond the Circle, women across various disciplines have heeded the call to arise and take upon themselves the righting of the wrongs, distortions and misrepresentations that have been promoted by mainstream Eurocentric male hegemony. Yacob-Haliso & Falola's publication entitled, *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (2020), remains to date the most comprehensive handbook that covers the rewriting and centring of the stories of African women by African women.

This volume, employing various methodologies and theoretical frameworks, seeks to contribute to reflections on the gender equality agenda as touted by SDGs and Agenda 2063 by combing through oral and written resources to unearth and document heroic displays of leadership by women of Southern Africa in particular, that remain hidden under the rubble of Eurocentric, colonial and African patriarchal archive and hegemony. The oral histories that have been preserved in word and transmitted from one generation to the other about the role played by women at the intersection of culture, gender and religion in Southern Africa, from the pre-colonial, colonial to postcolonial era, are the foci of this volume.

1.7 The Chapters

Part I is composed of a chapter that serves as a prologue. It functions to set the tone of the entire book through providing the geographical coverage of what Saidi calls the Bantu Matrilineal Zone (BMZ). Most of the Southern African countries, inclusive of Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to mention just some, are part of this zone. As such, they trace their origins to the matrilineal past which is the common feature of this zone. That legacy goes a long way in making sense of some of the dynamics that would, otherwise, be difficult to fully comprehend in unfolding stories of this publication. Saidi provides the chronological coverage that covers two periods and the nature of the evolution that took place in these periods. Part II consists of four chapters focusing on the pre-colonial *herstory* of Southern Africa using case studies from Angola, Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The major themes in this part of the book are oral tradition and storytelling which were largely the domain of women as in the case of Zimbabwe discussed in Chap. 2; matrilineality and matriarchal powers and leadership as discussed in Chaps. 3 and 5 with sample matriarchs from Angola, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Zambia; and traditional religion, rituals and women agency in rain petitioning as in the case of pre-colonial Zimbabwe discussed in Chap. 4.

Chapter 3: Matrilineality, women power and the matriarchs of pre-colonial Southern Africa by Musingafi, Mokhothu and Musi revisit African archives on matrilineality and sample matriarchs in Southern Africa. In matrilineal societies like the Ovango, Chewa, Tonga and Yombe of Southern Africa, inheritance is by female lineage and the family lineage is traced through the female side so that children take their mother's name. Not knowing the father of a child does not carry the stigma it does in patrilineal societies since children belong to their mother's household. Defining relation and identity in terms of a female ancestor means that decisions about who is or is not a relative are made in relation to the female line. The senior male relative in a matrilineal system is most often the mother's brother. Women own the group's property; and the essential family bond is between brothers and sisters, especially because the brother's children also inherit from their aunts. When daughters marry, their husbands become a part of the matrilineal group and live with the wife's family in the *matrilocal residence*. Matriarchal societies are those headed by women with females holding the primary power positions in the

control of politics, resources and property. Although marriage is still important in matrilineal societies as much as it is in patrilineal societies, it is women who have agency of sex and their bodies and they can have as many husbands as they want at the same time. It is however important to note that simply being matrilineal does not imply being matriarchal as a society can be matrilineal without being matriarchal and vice versa. In this chapter, although the authors dedicate the first section to matrilineality and the distinction with matriarch thereof, the main focus is on the neglected pre-colonial matriarchs' narratives of Southern Africa including the spiritual prophetess and warrior Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana of Zimbabwe, Queen Anna de Sousa Nzinga of Angola and prophetess 'Mantsopa of Lesotho. Data is gathered through oral traditions and document analysis to examine the lives of these great Southern African matriarchs and their inspirational influence to modern day African feminism.

Chapter 4: Are we not rightful citizens also? Women in oral literature and folk stories as a mobilising force for contemporary gender struggles in Southern Africa. In this chapter, Gudhlanga and Madongonda see women as the backbone of most oral deliveries in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, women have been overshadowed by men in written literature. This is because the patriarchal society which became deeply entrenched with the onslaught of colonialism disadvantaged women greatly. However, a close analysis of the pre-colonial African society demonstrates that women were the greatest storytellers. Rarely do people encounter male story tellers in traditional African society, Zimbabwe included. However, representation of women's storytelling role has been either deliberately ignored owing to patriarchy or that the written mode is too dominated by male writers to the extent that women have failed to represent themselves fully. In other words, the material on women in Southern Africa is severely gender-biased and requires that it be reconstituted. Yet women's stories can be a counter-narrative of widely held perspectives of female subordination in Africa and a counter-history of the misleading perspectives of the continent generated by the West (writing back to empire- Ashcroft et al., 1989). They remain a symbol of inspiration and a mobilising force for contemporary gender and afro-centred struggles. The memory and legacy of such women continue to influence contemporary Zimbabwean society with largely feminist scholars calling for the rewriting of women's stories. Attempts have been made to stifle, distort and even erase stories of what appeared to be a primitive people in general and apparently, women's stories have been the hardest hit.

Male-centred discourses have underscored female subordination and voicelessness and frowned at female agency. This chapter reveals the role played by female voices in selected oral literature and folk stories; stories generated by women themselves as well as those propagated in recorded epics and legends. The chapter is informed by Africana Womanism and Postcolonial theories. A critical literary analysis is done of the various spaces occupied by women in Zimbabwean society in a bid to reconstruct the woman and her story in Southern Africa.

Chapter 5: An Exploration of Women Leadership in Pre-Colonial Zambia: The Case of Mwenya Mukulu: In this chapter, Ilubala-Ziwa advances the argument that published history of the Zambian pre-colonial era is more prominent on how male leaders succeeded or failed in administrative roles than it is on their female counterparts. Recent attempts aimed at investigating women's space in Zambian political history have been restricted to colonial and postcolonial eras. This tendency robs contemporary women aspiring for leadership roles of credible and insightful role models. This chapter, therefore, seeks to document the seventeenth century female diplomat and traditional leader, Mwenya Mukulu's life experiences to argue that women did not only exist in pre-colonial era but also presided as leaders over the political, religious and spiritual affairs of their respective pre-colonial communities in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. The chapter argues that the Lungu, Azamba and Sao people of present day Mbala and Mpulungu Districts in Northern Province of Zambia benefited from the trajectory life experiences of Mwenya Mukulu. Though not much has been documented about her in the history of the country, Mwenya's leadership skills played a pivotal role in the governance, religious and spiritual well-being of the aforesaid people. In order to document Mwenya's life experiences appropriately, a phenomenological qualitative approach was used. Information was gathered through desk review and interviews carried out with four purposively selected participants from three chiefdoms in the three Districts influenced by Mwenya's leadership style. Data was also collected from one member of the Lungu Royal Establishment Council in Northern Province of Zambia, a province which, to some extent, benefited from Mwenya's leadership, religious and spiritual pursuits. The findings were analysed qualitatively according to emerging themes. A study on Mwenya Mukulu is long overdue but worth it, as it may supplement current and scant literature on matriarchy and their contribution to pre-colonial leadership, which has for a long time been highly patriarchal.

Chapter 6: Women as custodians of legal and moral values as inculcated by indigenous knowledge systems and practices of initiation schools. In this chapter, Kulehile and Sekonyela propose and argue convincingly that writers of the colonial era have downcast the role of women as custodians of moral and legal values in Basotho society. They authored African historical material, from their own perspective. In the process, they crafted misconceptions which reflected women as an oppressed gender—their significance and contributions to society were overlooked. The values and practices of Lesotho's traditional and cultural heritage, especially *lebollo*, or initiation schools for women, were neglected, yet the practices seemingly moulded the women into virtuous leaders in society. *Lebollo* marked a transition period for young men and women into manhood and womanhood, just like tertiary institutions or universities in Western education systems. It was intended to usher young men and women into the next stage of life to arm them with deep societal moral and legal values as leaders, to make society a better place for present and future generations. The chapter analyses indigenous knowledge systems and practices derived from the socialisation process of initiation schools, under the Batlokoa and the Basotho societies, as an important legacy and heritage for building the morals and legal values of women for future generations. The chapter illustrates the general values and virtues of the role of women in a traditional society from the African (traditional Mosotho) perspective. This is crucial, especially in the wake of the widespread distortions and abuse of these traditional values and practices which had reduced women to an oppressed gender from the pre-colonial era. The chapter relies on archival materials, as well as idiomatic expressions under customary law values to debate the deep meanings of such expressions in order to unearth the heroic roles of women in the pre-colonial era. It will show that the African women became custodians of legal and moral values of their societies. They were regarded as equal and complementary to men, and played a significant role in moulding the excellence and resilience of the future generations.

Part III looks into the constructions of women that resulted from the interface between coloniality and pre-coloniality. The role and the privilege of a scribe to write what he wants to write about, from his own perspective, will be interrogated and its implications duly appreciated. A predominantly white male scribe who defined the course of colonial history by privileging his own voice and perspective while excluding African histories and *herstories* will be interrogated and critically appraised.

The part starts with *Chap. 7: Struggles within Struggles: Women fighting for liberation in the war of liberation in Zimbabwe*. In it, Chititi explores the role played by women in fighting for the liberation struggle. It has emerged that women have managed to defy all odds in the colonial era in Zimbabwe as evidenced by their emergence in the fight for the liberation struggle. This was evidenced by the rise and shining of the popular women fighter and liberation war icon Mbuya Nehanda. This woman liberation icon was born Charwe and was initiated into the royal spirit medium (*mhondoro*) at a tender age. Nehanda grew up to be the symbol of Zimbabwean feminine resistance to colonial rule. The daughter of Mutota is the original Nehanda, Nyamhita. Charwe was possessed by the Nehanda spirit to become Nehanda. Since the days of Nyamhita, the Nehanda spirit had been possessing women to protect the Shona communities. The chapter includes other female heroines in the name of Sally Mugabe, Victoria Chitepo, Ruth Chinamano, Julia Zvobgo, Sunny Chinamano and Maud Muzenda. These are the women who possessed masculine qualities among others. The chapter seeks to bare out that women struggle in feminine struggles for them to emerge as heroines in any other struggles which are dominated by their male counterparts. This chapter gives primacy to the fact that women have their inherent ways of weaving their way out of struggles even though they are regarded as having exaggerated fragility in various communities. Women have the will power and possess innate resistance to suppression. Women have the zeal and energy to stand for themselves and have innate tendencies to excel in whatever they lay their hands on. Women have managed to create a grand label for themselves and defied all odds tied on them. In this book chapter, data was generated through document analysis, interviews and questionnaires amongst the participants, and a convenient sampling method was employed.

Chapter 8: Unsung Liberation Heroines: Women's Role in Liberation Struggles in Changing Colonial Contexts in Southern Africa. In this chapter, Mtombeni posits that the available scholarly literature on the liberation struggles of Southern Africa and Africa in general presents the struggle for independence as a gendered front. The literature loudly eulogises male heroes and is consciously or unconsciously silent about the heroines that actively participated in the liberation struggles of their respective countries. Although pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial African women actively participated in the army, war is still seen as a masculine activity, far beyond the reach of women. Consequently, pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial heroines are not fully acknowledged in most contemporary

narratives, and this calls for an archival revisit to reconstruct the history of the unsung liberation heroines. Using scant primary and secondary literature, this chapter explores the contribution of Southern African women in the liberation struggles. It argues that whilst women laboured under the limiting stigma of patriarchy, where they were confined in the domestic space, they defied the odds and joined their male counterparts in the liberation struggle. Their involvement in the liberation struggle was a double sword meant to liberate them from the yoke of patriarchy and from colonial rule. Women in Southern Africa played undeniable roles in the liberation struggles of their countries as mothers to the soldiers, wives to the soldiers and soldiers. The chapter is therefore a monumentalisation and a celebration of the legacy of Southern African women in the liberation struggle. It honours the contribution of the unsung Southern African heroines made in liberating their countries from colonial rule.

Chapter 9: The influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women's struggles for innovation during the colonial era. In this chapter, Mokhele argues that from time immemorial, humankind continuously strives for improving their ways of life and in most instances, such improvements happen as a result of contacts between local people and those of foreign origins. During the colonial era in Southern Africa, Lesotho already had a large influence from earlier encounters with missionaries who arrived in the country with the wives who apparently, in one way or another, influenced Basotho women towards devising innovative strategies to improve their lives. In history, most of the remarkable inventions spearheaded by women in Lesotho have gone unnoticed. This is partly due to the men who predominantly and deliberately dictated history, how it was presented as well as what was covered and who, many a time, focused on what men did at the detriment of telling 'her story'. It is in recent years that concerned African women are seen to be reclaiming the sharing and rewriting of women's stories by women in order to correct the distortions and omissions of history on 'her story'. This chapter examines the influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women's struggles for innovation. During the colonial era, Basotho women were forced to find innovative ways to manage their homes as well as protect their communities. Factors that triggered innovation will be outlined and discussed in-depth while their impact on women during the colonial period will be analysed. Stories of women will be used as points of reference because the chapter centres on 'her story'. Archival study on Basotho women during colonial time will be undertaken in order to trace and appreciate the level of innovation that

was driven by women in Lesotho. The chapter will contribute to rethinking the gender archives in Southern Africa, with specific focus on Lesotho as it will reveal the untold stories created by Basotho women during the epoch under study. The findings from the archival analysis will guide the conclusion of this chapter.

Part IV explores the postcolonial struggles of a Southern African women through the maze of multi-plural and multivalent meanings and representations as well as her place and role in the redefinition and rewriting of *herstory* for equality and empowerment in the context of Sustainable Development Goals.

This last part starts with *Chap. 10*, which is titled *Gender Equality Narratives by Zimbabwean Women: Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship*. In this chapter, Muringani and Hapazari argue that literature acknowledges the existence of gender inequalities in Africa in general and in Southern Africa in particular. Significant effort has been made to conscientize women of their rights to well-being and steps have been taken to redress gender inequalities. Several women conferences have been held for this cause, for example, the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women that was held in China and was attended by women from Zimbabwe and other Southern Africa countries. As a result, a movement towards reducing inequality was ushered in, introducing policies meant to increase opportunities for women. Though the policies have been received with mixed feelings as reflected in some studies, they have brought about significant improvements. Affirmative action is one such policy used by Southern Africa governments to reduce gender inequality, though implementation and enforcement of such policies has been reported ineffective in countries such as Zimbabwe. This indicates that further reduction of the margin between male and female citizens in Southern African countries is imperative. Besides, there are other factors such as religion and culture that are still hindering gender equality efforts. This chapter discusses narratives of postcolonial experiences by women in Zimbabwe, focusing on education, employment and entrepreneurship. Information generated from qualitative narrative research (stories and interviews) is presented under the selected themes of education, employment and entrepreneurship. The chapter gives Zimbabwean women a platform to contribute to the ongoing debates on gender equality in relation to sustainable development goals by sharing their stories and experiences from their own point of view. In addition to personal experiences, the narratives include how these women have helped each other to overcome the hurdle of

gender inequality. It is hoped that the shared experiences uncover how women in Zimbabwe have been affected by national policies and religious, societal and cultural practices. Lessons drawn from the experiences may contribute towards the desired changes to improve gender equality.

Chapter 11: Shona Women and Rain Petitioning Rituals in Zimbabwe: Indigenous Women's Ecological Wisdom and Agency. In this chapter, Zvingowanisei and Chirongoma address the gender oppression school of historical analysis which posits that women in Africa are confined to domesticity whilst enduring the oppression perpetrated by men. The latter also portrays women as minors who need protection and guidance from their male counterparts. This school of thought also maintains that women played insignificant roles in African societies. Contrary to this narrative, this chapter adopts the postcolonial theory to foreground the pivotal roles played by African women, focusing particularly on Shona women in rain petitioning rituals in Zimbabwe. The main argument proffered in this chapter is that women are neither restricted to the domestic space nor oppressed; rather they play focal roles in the religious, social, economic and political spheres. They actively participate in the public domain, for instance, in religion as rain-petitioners through the rituals of *mukwerera* and *kupetera*. The discussion also illustrates how, in religion, women can crossover to male type duties and sometimes, they complement each other with men. The religious domain is thus, not exclusively for men, as the gender oppression school of historical analysis opines, it is for both sexes. The chapter concludes by refuting the widely held view that societies in Africa are steeped in the patriarchal order, diminish women and consign them to the domestic sphere. It affirms that though African societies worship the God of patriarchy, this does not permanently push African women to the communities' periphery.

Chapter 12: Unongqawuse Ngase Mlanjeni: Re-imagining a young prophetess and a human being: Social Community Pastoral Caregiving Perspective. In Chap. 12, Nobuntu Matoleni presents Nongqawuse as one of the contentious figures in the history of amaXhosa. Hi-story has not been kind to her. She enters hi-story through either colonial records, or the oral traditions passed down from generation to generation among amaXhosa people. She is known as a false prophetess and is associated with the cattle-killing incident, which is termed by others as a genocide, a national suicide, — to name but a few. As a result, some view her as a symbol of lies, while others view her as a symbol of destruction. Some scholars sympathise with her and paint her as a liberator. Different disciplines, with

diverse perspectives and genres, write about her as a shadow and/or a symbol. Her name and her-story became lyrics of songs or poems, but her personhood occupies very little narrative space. This chapter acknowledges the dangers of a single story; hence, it adopts a totally different stance where the focus shifts to her as a young woman, prophetess and a human being. The social community pastoral caregiving perspective is used in combination with *emlanjeni* concept of amaXhosa to answer the following question: To what extent was Nongqawuse's little-known personhood beyond her time? Indigenous storytelling methodology will be employed to answer the above-mentioned question. The concept '*emlanjeni*', (direct translation: "by the river") will be unpacked as this text reimagines her life.

Chapter 13: 2018 Harmonized elections and women's lack of voice: how can women build capacity? Vongai Nyawo reflects on the extent to which women have always actively participated in politics in Zimbabwe. She observes that the Zimbabwean society has been hesitant to support female politicians. Starting with family, friends and the immediate community, barbed comments and murmurings have been passed each time a woman demonstrated interest in politics. Even fellow women have not spared their fellow women in terms of passing derogatory and discouraging comments. This chapter goes on to documents the experience of a female candidate in the 2018 harmonised Zimbabwean elections. The last part of the chapter attempts to map out strategies towards capacity building for fellow women.

Chapter 14: The evolution of women's positionality in postcolonial Lesotho's households, education and politics: from being a "child" to being a decision maker. Mokhele, Rakolobe and Makumane argue that the duality of Lesotho legal system seems to have contributed to an evolution of women's positionality in the postcolonial era, more specifically in households, education and politics. Notably, during the pre-colonial to colonial eras, the place of women in Lesotho was ostensibly exclusively within the household. Their major activities included, inter alia, the reproductive role, preparation of meals, fetching water as well as maintaining hygiene while also obeying all the rules set by the husband, who was considered as the head of the family. Women in Lesotho were customarily considered as 'minors' as they could not make any decision without the consent of their spouses. It was only in the postcolonial period that the new image of women in Lesotho was discerned as their position was also reimagined within the patriarchal Basotho nation and community. At the dawn of the

postcolonial era, education and paying jobs were supposedly privileges reserved specifically for males, while females were regarded as homemakers whose role was to serve their husbands. It was only after Lesotho's independence that gradual shifts were seen towards repositioning women in households and extending it to education and politics. Notably, women began accessing higher education; and registered their presence in politics; their role in politics could be traced while their ascension to key positions in places of employment could be felt. In this chapter, authors explore the seemingly changing position of women in Lesotho's different sectors, primarily in households, education and politics, from being regarded as 'minors' to ultimately being acknowledged as decision makers. Document analysis of purposively selected legislation as well as stories from women protagonists will also be analysed in order to understand the drivers that led to the shift which resulted in the reimaging as well as the reimagination of the place of women in the post-colony.

Chapter 15: Shifting gender dynamics in the postcolonial times: Experiences of female Secondary School Principals in Lesotho. Tlali and Sepiriti advance the thesis that during the pre-colonial era, gender roles among the indigenous Basotho, and in most African communities, were distinctly defined, yet not characterised as ingrained gender oppression. Men were assigned defence and hunting jobs while women took care of domestic responsibilities. With the advent of formal education during the colonial era, more Basotho women obtained education and joined the workforce. However, very few women ascended to managerial positions. Colonisation seemingly perpetuates oppression and marginalisation as women gradually populated the traditionally male designated roles. The postcolonial time brought a new hope for women leadership in social organisations. This era has thus given way to the reconsideration and accommodation of previously marginalised pockets of society. This era has also necessitated a shift in patriarchal gender stereotypes towards the gender equity agenda. Thus, more and more women are venturing into spaces that were traditionally solely occupied by their male counterparts. Even in the educational space, the postcolonial era calls for more women to take up educational management roles. Despite this imperative, female principals still encounter gender-related challenges in managing schools. Hence, this chapter explores the experiences faced by some of the Lesotho female school principals in managing the schools and their coping mechanisms. The chapter departed from an interpretivist stance and adopted a qualitative approach. Social Role Theory (SRT) was used as an overarching theoretical

framework since it enables scrutiny of gender stereotypes ascribed to male and female careers. Fifteen (15) conveniently selected female secondary school principals from the selected Lesotho secondary schools were interviewed. The findings confirmed that female secondary school principals face numerous challenges, which include resistance from both male and female teachers, sexual harassment and struggle to maintain a balance between work and family life. The chapter further revealed some of the female principals, cope by using avoidance techniques and seeking intervention from the school board. The main recommendation made in this chapter is that the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training should seek to empower women principals while also soliciting support for them from the wider society.

Chapter 16: Women and the world of science: Challenges and prospects in Post-Colonial Lesotho Secondary Education. Itumeleng Mokhele argues that in the postcolonial era, the presence of women in the scientific world has been felt. Women made strides to enter the field that was dominated by men; namely the world of science. Despite numerous challenges faced by women scientists, they are persisting in shaping the world of science while also attributing the new image that was never anticipated in this field. They grafted a new image for themselves in this field in the postcolonial Southern Africa as more women practitioners emerged in various science domains. Their presence created an impetus that was never felt as some began to practice as teachers, medicine and in other fields of science. The brave move did not only change the narrative of women in this domain, but it also highlighted challenges and prospects of women scientists. This chapter will focus on women and the world of science in Southern Africa, with specific reference to Lesotho as the country presents a case of interest for investigating how women scientists created a new story that has been shaped by them. Some women challenged the status quo by recreating their space through breaking the barriers imposed by pre-colonial and colonial societies; they called for the reimagining of their place because they broke the barriers by entering those fields which were exclusively regarded as the male domain. The objective of this chapter is to explore how women claimed their space in the scientific world in Lesotho. Challenges and prospects for women in science in the postcolonial era will be looked into. Historical analysis of strides of women scientists in Southern Africa and their stories will be examined and analysed in order to inform their role and contribution in reimaging and reimagining their place in the world of science. Results will inform the conclusion of

the chapter. Critical reflection on the shift brought by women in the scientific domain in the postcolonial era will also be underlined.

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PART I

Prologue

CHAPTER 2

Grandmothers, Mothers, and Persons of Authority: The Non-patriarchal History of the Bantu Matrilineal Zone, 1500 CE to Independence

Christine Saidi

2.1 Introduction

The period 1500 to 1800 was a historical period in which there were outside influences, events, and people that would have an impact on economies, political structures, social institutions, and epistemologies of many of the peoples of the Bantu Matrilineal Zone (BMZ). Communities in west central Africa were directly affected by the Atlantic trade in enslaved people, while those in the central part of the BMZ were indirectly influenced. For those beyond the Atlantic trade, there was an increase in long distance trade, especially for ivory and forest items. This trade impacted

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various matrilineal societies which in turn forced changes in matrilineal institutions. In the nineteenth century, the East African trade in enslaved peoples affected those in the BMZ from east-central to east Africa.

In the era from 1800 to independence all of Africa was affected by the intrusion of Western powers—first by missionaries promoting Christianity, the explorers who assumed they were the first people to discover Africa, and later European colonialism. In post-colonial Africa the ghosts of colonialism are still present, but in the BMZ many matrilineal communities not only survived colonialism, but they innovate ways to use their matrilineal worldviews to tackle modern problems confronting them.

2.2 1500–1800

By 1500 some BMZ communities were involved in long distance trade or the process of centralization. As a result, several matrilineal communities were forced to innovate to maintain the basic principles of matrilineality and accommodate the new economic and political realities. Social institutions such as 'biologically male social motherhood' and political institutions like 'perpetual kinship' were originated, at least in part, to stretch matrilineal institutions in response to new environments without changing fundamental epistemologies. The resilience of matrilineal worldviews and institutions is evident since once colonialism ended African control of long distance trade, these communities contracted and once again authority was centered around matrilineal families.

Social Parenthood

Starting around 1500 long distance trade and traders began to challenge elements of matrilineal social organization. Previously the main source of income for most societies in the BMZ was that of agriculture. In an agricultural environment, the sororal groups from each family often determined the distribution of the agricultural goods as well as controlling portions of the agricultural labor. As the trade developed, male traders began to accumulate wealth in goods, yet even though they had considerable wealth in comparison with those who depended on agriculture, they were unable to wield authority within matrilineal societies. Goods were being traded longer distances, which created a contradiction. Most of the

long distance traders were young biological males with a great deal of wealth, who until they were parents would have had little authority within their families or communities. While local trade was the work of mothers and grandmother, long distance trade presented difficulties for mothers who were pregnant or nursing an infant. Among Bantu-speaking peoples prior to colonialism, no one individual owned land; therefore, those that controlled people's labor had authority. Many scholars have argued that wealth in precolonial Bantu communities was primarily based on how many followers one could rely upon in times of need. An elder with a large family can count on all those within the cosmic family and sometimes others who chose to support them (Fourshey et al., 2017). Traders had no ability to create a following or their own branch of the matrifamily, since access to both marriage and parenthood were still under the authority of sororal groups (Saidi, 2010). Sororal group consists of older related mother and grandmothers with their children and grandchildren. As a result, a new institution, which can be called 'social motherhood,' was innovated as a way to reflect the new wealth of traders, without changing the basic matrilineal worldview.

There is historical precedent for social parenting institutions based on studies conducted among patrilineal societies in West Africa as well as in patrilineal Bantu communities. The literature describes traditions in which older women can become fathers often referred to as "female husbands" or "woman to woman" marriages (Amadiume, 1987; Greene, 1998). The female husband terminology tends to emphasize the marital aspect of the relationship, even though these kinds of familial ties are made primarily to allow parenting, thus the term 'social father' is used in this study. A social father has been described in the literature as an older wealthy mother, usually divorced, living in a patrilineal community. The only way these mothers could have highest status and create their own branch of a patrifamily was to become a father. This was done by the older mother providing bride wealth, that was negotiated with a family to marry a younger biofemale who in turn would produce children for this newly formed branch of the patrilineage. In patrilineal, patrilocal communities, the typical sanctifier of a marriage was the payment of brideswealth, a set of items transferred from the groom's family to the bride' family. This payment was meant to compensate for the transference of the woman's work and reproductivity to the husband's family and to acknowledge the social

significance of the children she would bear as members of her husband's patriclan. Most of the literature on these institutions is on West Africa, but during the late precolonial period there were social fathers found among Bantu patrilineal communities in Southern Africa, Venda, Lovedu, Pedi, Zulu, Sotho, and Tswana; and in eastern Africa, Kuria, Simbiti, Ngoreme, Gusii, Kamba, and Kikuyu (Cadigan, 1998).

For the communities of Central Africa where the trade did not involve humans, there needed to be a social mechanism that would allow the surplus wealth that was controlled by traders to be re-distributed and transformed into tangible authority. By the sixteenth century both the matrilineal Lele, who are Kuba-related people residing along the Kasai River in the DRC and Pende, a matrilineal Western Savannah Bantu-speaking peoples who reside between the Lyongo and Kasai rivers, also in DRC, innovated institutions that created dependent relationships based on debt and pawnage (Douglas, 1964). Debts were incurred because it was believed that few deaths were natural and someone with a family was to blame. Traders loaned the offending family, goods to pay the assessed fines. To provide collateral for these loans the debtor family had to furnish a member who would become a pawn or dependent of the trader. Traders would then claim the 'collateral people' as their own children as well as any children they produced, thus making the trader a social mother who produced a new branch of the matrifamily and could call on these children when the social mother needed followers.

The English terms 'client,' 'dependent' or 'pawn' cannot fully encompass the dynamism of these social institutions. In the Pende language a person designated as a dependent under these conditions was called, *ajikulu* (s.)/*bajikulu* (pl.) which means grandchild/grandchildren. To use the Pende term for grandchildren to name people who were clients or pawns means that they were understood to be both in the family, but with little seniority (Ibid.). Unlike the typical grandparent-grandchild relationships, the *bajikulu* was a socio-economic relationship contingent on an incurred debt. For the traders, the practice of accumulating *bajikulu* enabled them to begin to amass dependents and thus more authority.

Those traders on the eastern side of the BMZ who traded in enslaved people were able to create social motherhood by just marrying an enslaved woman who had no matrilineage demanding brideservice and thus creating a new line for their matrilineage with an enslaved mother. By late 1700 Yao, a southeastern matrilineal people, had developed social motherhood institutions. Yao were major traders in the East African slave trade and

married enslaved women who had no family and created their own branch of the matrifamily within a matrilineal community (Alpers, 1966). Social motherhood continued into the late precolonial and early colonial era as recorded in missionary church courts reports on the Kaguru matrilineal peoples of Tanzania: Wealthy Kaguru men enjoyed advantages in this contest over conjugal authority. "Male entrepreneurs who invested in the nineteenth-century caravan trade were able to trump in-laws' claims, establishing virilocal, patrilineal homesteads" (Peterson, 2006. p. 991). Since they have remained matrilineal, they were able to do this within the overarching ideology and institutions of matrilineality.

Parenthood may or may not have been contingent on gender considering that in the above examples there were various creative ways in which parenthood was actualized and all people can potentially be social parents as either a father or mother. Since not everyone can biologically parent, this may be additional evidence that motherhood and fatherhood were not necessarily only grounded in reproductive abilities, but in social roles too. The communities that practice social motherhood returned to older matrilineal practices when colonialism ended their participation in various long distance trade routes (Mitchell, 1956).

New Concepts of Wealth and Hierarchy

By 1500 a minority of communities in the BMZ had adopted new ways to conceptualize wealth and social relations which is evidenced by the semantic changes found in both the proto-Bantu root **-gàndá* and **-bánjà* (Saidi, 2023). Another historical innovation started prior to this era but became definitely more significant by 1500 was that of "chiefly clans." These transformations would, for some communities, signify moves toward centralization, while the majority of BMZ communities remained equity democracies.

Semantic changes in meanings of older Bantu roots reveal conceptual transformations for Bantu speakers. They innovated new meanings for older roots which allow historians a brief glimpse into their changing worldviews. An example is the pro-Bantu root, ***-gàndá which originally meant "clan", "family", "house", "part of a village;" "a village;" and "a matrilineage." Over three thousand years ago ***-gàndá was used to indicate a new settlement, probably of newly arrived matrilineal family members who would separate and form new settlements but recognizing that they were from the same "womb" or matrifamily (Klieman, 2003).

About five hundred years ago in some Bantu-speaking areas, patrifamilies began to dominate. Scholars have argued that the reasons for this social change were political centralization, cattle becoming an important asset or a combination of both (Holden & Mace, 2003). Of course, there were cattle keeping peoples who continued to maintain matrilineal social institutions such as Ila of Zambia and Herrero of Namibia (Saidi, 2010). An example of how cattle-keeping did impact family structures is found among Bantu-speaking peoples who resided on the fringes of the BMZ, in regions around Lake Nyanza. These Bantu-speaking peoples began a period of consolidation and centralization as far back as the first millennium CE based on cattle and agricultural production. During the process of transforming families from matrilineal to patrilineal some Bantu speakers in this area began to use *-gàndá to mean "patrifamily." A consolidation of father authority based on cattle took place in parts of this wider region.

Ruund (Lunda) speakers in Central Africa used another meaning for this root, which reflected changes in how identity and status were defined. In Lunda, *ngand*, derived from **-gàndá*, means "occupied and cultivated land" (Hoover 1978, 201). But *ngand* was also the term for a commoner who worked the land. Ruund speakers de-centered familial ties as a means to access authority, and for the first time in this region people were identified by the land they cultivated instead of as members of their family and the word they used to identify this type of social relation was *ngand*. This root, which throughout the BMZ, for at least the last three thousand years had been used to designate a matrifamily, later became the term among some for patrilineal families and for others a new social unit based on land one farmed.

Another revealing semantic change is found in the proto-Bantu root, **-bánjà*, originally meaning 'veranda or plot of land in front of a house,' but later in specific regions of BMZ words from this root named types of social relationships. Similar to **-gàndá*, this root also appears to have a wide range of meanings in Bantu-speaking Africa, from the literal sense of a cleared place in front of the house to a type of familial relationship. Possibly the veranda was a metaphor for close family relatives who shared and probably met on that common ground in front of houses as early as at least three thousand years ago. The combining of the meaning of the veranda with the idea of close family members may be widespread among Bantu families within the BMZ. An excellent example of this among

Bemba and other related Bantu speakers, is found in the term they used for land in front of a house, *ulu-kolo* (from the proto-Bantu root, **-kódò* which means 'matriclan', 'relatives,' 'belonging,' and 'origin'). The Bemba use *ulu-kolo* to mean both relatives and a veranda shows the conceptual connection between both family and veranda by using the same word for both among a group of Bantu speakers in the BMZ.

From the beginnings of the common era, Nyasa Bantu-speaking peoples used **-bánjà* to mean matrifamily. In Southern Malawi, based on oral traditions and comparative ethnography, Yao, Lomwe and Nyanja speakers have used **-bánjà* to mean a subset of the matrifamily, the sororal group. Among other Bantu-speaking peoples who have shifted to patrilineal organizing, especially those within the BMZ, the connection of **-bánjà* to kinship and family was retained as well but was also applied to terms involved in marriage. For example, Sena, a patrilineal group who reside south of Chewa, Nyanja and Tumbuka in East-Central Africa, use **-bánjà* to represent marriage. The patrilineal Western Luba or Tshiluba, whose homeland is in the south-central DRC use the *word banza*, derived from **-bánjà*, to describe an "established married woman. In communities where matrilineal organization dominates, the matrifamily and especially the sororal group, control access to parenthood and the production of more family members through brideservice, whereas in patrilineal societies the patrifamily have access to the birth of new members only through marriage. In each type of family **-bánjà* represents the institutions that gives the family access to parenthood and the creation of new members.

In both matrilineal and patrilineal families, **-bánjá* represents varying forms of family relationships. This contrasts with the use of **-bánjá* in the centralized Great Lakes Region around Lake Nyanza outside the BMZ. In the thirteenth century among the peoples of North Nyanza *kibánjá* meant 'a banana grove,' 'a banana garden in front of the house,' but as banana gardens became large plantations it came to mean a 'banana plantation,' which expands the meaning of land in front of one's house to that of a large amount of cultivated land. In the early twentieth century, among both Buganda and Bunyoro speakers, meant non-kin clients that worked the land (Schoenbrun, 1998). Prior to the concentration of leadership in Buganda and Bunyoro, it was shared labor in building a new house and those who helped to build the house received food and beer. Thus, *kibánjá* originally meant a debt between two neighboring families. But later when

some members of these communities became very wealthy it became a term for paying back a debt by working someone else's land. Bunyoro society had kibánjá tenants who had no kinship ties, but "shared a single identity and territorial interest around a land controller." The semantic history" of **-bánjá* shows a transition from purely kinship concepts of identity and status to more hierarchical social relations based on relationships to land rather than familial ones. It is particularly revealing that both **-gánda* and **-bánjà* became, in centralizing societies, words for relationships defined as between those who worked the land and those who controlled that labor replacing links with cosmic family ties.

This macro-research on the use of these two roots coupled with the colonial ethnographies and localized histories allow historians to view ideological shifts from wealth in people based on the family to wealth in non-family labor on the land or the land itself. One of the first moves toward contracting authority was the innovation of chiefly clans. The first real evidence of chiefly families in the BMZ, based on oral tradition and archeology, dates to around 900 CE. Once a family or a group of families was designated as chiefly, then the rest of the families became the non-chiefly or "common" families. These societies established rules that required all leaders to come from specific designated families and this was a radical concept that was different from how people operated in previous eras. For many communities it had only a small impact as a member of the chiefly clan of matrilineal Bisa (Zambia) explained:

> It is not to say that we, the people of the chiefly clan, can choose ourselves and say, "This is the one who is suitable to succeed." No, the people of the country would see who was generous and lived peacefully with them, and they would say, 'this is the one'. (Kingsley, 1980, p. 91)

But for other communities it was the first step toward centralization.

Centralized Polities

An outcome of both constructing new meanings of what constituted wealth and the political implementation of the concept of chiefly clans was for some Bantu-speaking groups in the BMZ, a catalyst for the creation of larger scale, multi-mother-tongued states. Some matrilineal communities created new institutions to ensure both matrilineality and heterarchical distribution of power based on new economic environment, but others

did not. Within the BMZ most people remained in matrilineal cosmic families living in equity democracies with limited accommodations for changes in environment or political and social influences.

This section will examine several polities such as the Kingdom of Kongo, Luba, and Lunda that by 1500 did innovate more hierarchical political forms in the BMZ as well as the Bemba's quasi centralized polity. Kingdom of the Kongo, in the region that is today Angola and western DRC, became involved with Europeans after centralizing a few centuries earlier, but once the trade in enslaved humans moved to other regions, the matrilineages, *kanda*, resumed their authority. In southeastern DRC, the Luba Empire was built around intellectual and spiritual beliefs, and even though they transformed inheritance through the patrifamily, motherhood imagery nevertheless remained central to their rule. The Lunda of central DRC de-emphasized familial ties and innovated a concept called "perpetual kinships," which identified people by the land they worked, and based social relations on a complicated merit-based flexibility. Among Bemba, of modern Zambia and DRC, the N'gandu chiefly clans began to attempt centralization by controlling female initiation ceremonies and family ancestor worship.

In the late 1300's various groups of people formed Kingdom of the Kongo on the lower Congo River, since this had been an ideal place to control the busy trade along the river and demand tribute. The Kingdom of the Kongo was matrilineal with powerful matrilineages called, *kanda*, which were the major social and political divisions. One's *kanda* determined a person's identity, access to land and political office as well as inheritance (Hilton, 1983). The new amalgamated polity found itself pulled into the orbit of the Portuguese and the Atlantic trade in the fifteenth century. Among the first African enslaved people to reach the Americas were those from Kingdom of Kongo and others in the southwestern parts of Africa.

After over 100 years of independence, Kongo became involved with the Portuguese, Christianity, and, later, as the first kingdom in Africa to be affected by the Atlantic slave trade. During this period, the authority of the *kandas* was less significant, but certainly not eliminated. Many of the Portuguese troops, who had fought in various local wars as well as participated in catching slaves, remained in Kongo and married daughters from important *kanda*s. This allowed them to be integrated into Kongo society. These mixed families soon became a strong Kongolese merchant class and began to dominate the slave trade. (Ibid.). But after several years the

Kingdom of the Kongo found itself on the periphery of the important trading routes, and the matrilineal *kanda*s became the major political power base once again.

As the Kingdom of the Kongo was in decline, the Portuguese were turning to the new slave trading states of Matamba and Ndongo. The best-known Bantu-speaking historical figure from this era was Queen Nzinga. Nzinga was born in 1583 and was favored by her father, the king. Portuguese written documents and oral traditions relate a story about the time Nzinga was sent to negotiate with the Portuguese. When she arrived dressed in all her royal finery, the Portuguese leader was seated in a chair, and she was told to sit on a mat. In her culture, this was an insult, so she then asked one of her women servants to go on her hands and knees. Nzinga sat on the woman's back and negotiated with the Portuguese man as an equal. She later became ruler and had a forty-year military career. She became a master at playing various sides against each other. She twice converted to Christianity as well relying on her matrilineal social relations for protection. At times she supported the slave trade and other times she fought against it. She was a very important ruler of Angola--but like most historical figures, she was complex and neither a villain nor a heroine (Heywood, 2017).

While the Atlantic Slave Trade was raging in West Africa, in East, Central and Southern Africa some of the Bantu societies in the BMZ were in the process of centralizing which meant social institutions were also changing. Around 1500, the second and much larger Luba Empire was formed. Unlike the other large scale multi-ethnic polities of the BMZ, paternal clans began to dominate, and political leadership became determined by one's father. Groups of Luban immigrants left the new empire and contributed to various smaller matrilineal states like that of the Chewa in modern Malawi. It is possible that these immigrants represented matrilineal families that either were uncomfortable with patrilineality or had lost their authority during the centralizing process.

The center of the Luba Empire was in what is today, Katanga Province, DRC. Luba had moved into these regions of matrilineal peoples two to three hundred years earlier, and even though they had become patrilineal at the center by around 1500, the institutions, art, religion and world views certainly had matrilineal elements. Even though they organized their families around patrilineal descent, the Luba continued using the prefix *bena-*, "people of the mother"—from **ba-ina-*, combining the plural prefix **ba* from the word for human beings to the old Bantu root

word, **-ina* 'mother.' It was added to the ethnic clan or family name of any group of related peoples. This was a preservation of a more ancient concept of people identified by their maternal relatives, retained from a time when an ancestral Luba society still followed the older Bantu practices of matrilineal descent (Saidi, 2010).

Luba created a large, centralized polity in which political positions were inherited patrilinealy; yet the significance of motherhood and mothering was demonstrated by the regalia of Luba leaders which included ceremonial weapons and staffs with one or more mother figures in birthing position and hands at either their nursing breasts or navel symbolizing the spiritual power of motherhood. The ruler during their coronation wore a 'woman's hairstyle,' which according to Luba informants represented the idea that "woman is kinship." (Roberts & Roberts, 1996, p. 6). Females of significance within Luba societies were mothers or grandmothers, thus 'women' should be translated as a maternal figure. Other royal staff were described as a sculptural map and the "chief will put a female figure on the staff to prove that his kingdom comes from this woman. It is like a sign or a memory of the woman who brought royalty to us (Ibid., 69). Art historian Mary Nooter Roberts explains further:

> *Only in the deliberate merging of male and female qualities can the ruler attain these ideals, for it is through the women of his world that he rules with balanced authority and equanimity. In the realm of Luba royal culture, then, and its epistemological underpinnings, the king remains a woman.* (Ibid., 80)

Luban speakers believed, well into recent times, that only a mother's body was strong enough to hold the ancestor spirit of a deceased ruler, thus grandmothers in the chiefly family were sacred mediums to their ancestors who had been rulers. Luba power rested not with a single dynastic line of kings or with a single "center," but with a constellation of chieftaincies, office holders, societies, and sodalities that validated claims to power in relation to what was probably a largely mythical center based on honoring motherhood.

Another important innovation found in Luba and Luba-related peoples such as the Kanyok and Songye is the use of the prefix **-ina* (from Luba term for mother, **nyina*) to designate important political offices. Kanyok and Songye in the region created small scale states between 1500 and 1600. During the processes of centralization and patrilineal social organizing, the roles of mothers and sisters within ruling families remained

significant. While royal leadership was based on patrilineal bloodline, many of the important offices were inherited through one's mother's lineage. Some of titles such as 'sister of a chief', *inamutombo*, were marked with the suffix, **ina*, (**-na* prefix among other non-Luban related Bantu speakers in the area). A more important male title was that of the *shingahemb*, a matrilineal uncle responsible for dealing with the ancestors—and obvious remnant of the matrilineal past (Yoder, 1992). The significance of these titles indicated that positions of authority were beginning to become gendered. Sisters from the royal family were emissaries and ambassadors, counselors and advisors.

Southwest of the Luba Empire was the Ruund or western Lunda polity, which dated from the end of the sixteenth century. A unique aspect of the Ruund was that status and authority were flexible and whatever one's birth, there were opportunities for them to become an important person in the Ruund—status appeared to be fluid. The term commonwealth probably best describes the Ruund in that it was a large group of smaller relatively independent communities stretching from the upper Kasai River in modern northeastern Angola to the western DRC, with the Ruund capital and surrounding Lunda areas as the center. The Ruund was situated east of the middle Kasai River, and at its largest comprised over 300,000 people, held together by creative approaches toward family, perpetual kinship and attaining authority was possible for most people.

Unlike the Luba who became patrilineal, Lunda never totally abandoned their matrilineal worldview of the Ruund past. An example is that the term applied to a maternal uncle, *make wakad mayel*, 'mother without breasts or milk.' He was never called father like all the other uncles. Additionally, bridewealth was usually quite low and only symbolic and the couple moved in with the husband's family unless the marriage was to a wife from a village of an important chief, in which case the couple's home would be matrilocal. With minimal bridewealth, divorce was easy, since there was only a small amount to pay back. Sons inherited from their fathers, and daughters inherited from their mothers. The father and his family had first claim on children, but land rights tended to pass matrilineally in most areas. Land rights to *angand* belonged to the maternal kin, but a man was supposed to live in his father's village. The Ruund family systems, in other words, created lots of options, but additionally some real tensions (Hoover, 1978).

Perpetual kinship is considered a unique concept innovated by the Ruund. Instead of relying on elite or royal families to produce new

leadership, which often involved large and sometimes bloody disputes, the person who was selected to rule could be from any family, since his coronation to Lunda leadership meant he was no longer a member of his family, but became part of the family of the original ancestors of the Ruund. The justification for innovating perpetual kinship is found in the oral tradition in which the mother and original ruler of the Lunda, Ruwej, is in fact not a biological mother, but a social one. Once a person's identity became linked to the *ngand* coupled with the institution of perpetual kinship, one's family was not a major consideration for becoming a leader, whether it be in a small *ngand* or ruler of the Ruund.

More than five hundred years ago the proto-Ruund Lunda were matrilineal and had a powerful queen mother *Namwan*, same term as *Luba inamwan*, but with the **-na* prefix found in non-Luban parts of the BMZ (Yoder, 1992). This title, later, during the centralization process, became mother of the ruler, which was her title, but which rarely meant a biological connection. Her consort, and with lesser authority was the *Samwan* from -se, father. Additionally, there was the *Nambaz*, social sister of ruler, and her consort, *Sambaz*. All of these chiefly family titles appear borrowed from Luba and Kanyok yet they used different prefixes, thus the concept was probably borrowed, but not the exact term. Historian Hoover records over seventy different Ruund titles. Each of these titles, especially those he labeled maternal, is a title that could reflect actual blood connection or was given to someone without blood connection, but had inherited the title. For example, the many powerful women chiefs were called the aunts of the ruler, but rarely actually were they women who have achieved this title. After the fall of the Lunda to the Chokwe in 1887, Lunda-speakers returned to strong matrilineages and are classified currently as matrilineal.

Bemba of modern Zambia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were moving toward centralization under Bena N'gandu chiefly family. While aspects of centralization development were prevented by colonialism, the male elders of the N'gandu clan were able to convince colonial anthropologist, Audrey Richards, that they had already become a centralized polity claiming they controlled all the peoples of the northern region of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and she believed them. Thus, the N'gandu clan created a quasi-centralized state with the aid of colonialism (Moore & Vaughn, 1994).

What is of interest to historians studying the precolonial history of the BMZ is that Bemba are an example of matrilineal peoples in the process of centralization when the British arrived. The economic impetus for

centralization began in the eighteenth century, when N'gandu families' territory included the trails of some of the East African traders in ivory and enslaved people. Bemba males who enforced tolls on the trade were becoming wealthy, since enforcing these tolls became more significant sources of income than was made by farming. Thus, those who collected the tolls, usually young males, were important to the economy, but were under the authority of the sororal group.

The story of the Bemba centralization process is different from the Luba in that they remained matrilineal, but the chiefly family, Bena N'gandu, attempted to challenge the authority of the sororal group and maternal elders. British colonial anthropologist, Audrey Richards, observed that by the early twentieth century, there was an owner of *chisungu*, or female initiation who was usually a male of rank who would pay for the ritual for his female relatives and sometimes for their future wife. Not only did the *mwine* or owner of *chisungu* replaced the authority of the sororal group, in paying for the ritual they increased their own status (Richards, 1982). Additionally, the leader of *chisungu* used to be the most knowledgeable mother or grandmother within the community, but with N'gandu rule, it instead became an older female member of the ruling family. Another example of the chiefly clan usurping the control and authority of the sororal group and female elders (Ibid.).

Hugo Hinefeelar, a White Father Catholic Priest, spent years collecting oral tradition and histories from elders who had learned from their ancestors the religious and social views of the Bemba communities prior to the rise of the N'gandu family. Older Bemba mothers and grandmothers related the traditions prior to the rise of the N'gandu clan. Previously the *chisungu* initiate's sororal group would supervise the initiation ceremonies. The *nachimbusa*, the mother or grandmother in charge of *chisungu*, was selected for her knowledge and teaching abilities and could come from any family. The nachimbusa knew the songs, dances, and meaning of the *mbusa*, 'things handed down'. *Mbusa* were memory devices for teaching the initiates. How their meanings changed over time is revealing. For example, there is a clay *mbusa* basket which represents a young woman's family. Prior to the rule of the N'gandu family, the *mbusa* was carried on initiates' heads to show that the matrifamily was the most important obligation. With the rise of the N'gandu family, a number of changes came about. One of those is reflected in the fact that baskets that initiates carried

on their heads came to represent a husband rather than the matrifamily (Richards, 1982).

Changes in *chisungu* enabled future husbands and the N'gandu chiefly family to challenge the authority of sororal groups and the matrifamily. Hinfelaar asked elderly females and examined early missionary documents to discover that prior to and during early colonial period, the initiation ceremonies were called *ukwingisha icisungu*, which meant that they were delivering the young person from the cold forebears to the warmth of the village community. But it was changed in the early twentieth century to *ukucindila icisungu*, which means to teach her good behavior (Hinfelaar, 1994). The N'gandu chiefly family understood that in order to centralize under their rule it was necessary to undermine the authority of the sororal group by transforming the most central religious and social ceremony, *chisungu* and shaping it into an institution they could control instead of the sororal groups.

Most communities within the BMZ maintained worldviews that welcomed heterarchy. Yet there were some that began to allow a few people to accumulate substantial wealth and authority over others. The majority of the families in the BMZ made only minor modifications to their heterarchical matrilineal worldview. Yet from 1500 to the middle of the nineteenth century, long distance trade began to challenge the old matrilineal epistemologies. Some communities innovated institutions that were in fact forms of social motherhood to accommodate new economic realities but within a matrilineal framework. Innovations such as chiefly clans coupled with new trading opportunities encouraged some communities in the BMZ to centralize. During the process of centralization most societies retained matrilineality as a form of identity or at least matrifocal worldviews. Bemba quasi-state's process toward contracting authority involved limiting the status and control of sororal groups by controlling female initiation.

2.3 1800 to Present

This section will primarily discuss the effects of colonialism on the communities of the BMZ; the colonial struggle and glimpses of how vibrant matrilineality is in the post-colonial era. Volumes have been written about the economic, social, political, and psychological effects of colonialism in Africa. The focus here will be on how, during this historical period, matrilineal societies met the challenges of Western aggression both physically

and mentally, often with innovate approaches. to their survival. Again, there has been a great deal of discussion of the enforced creation of such categories as tribe, ethnicity and race, but there is less research, especially for Bantu communities, on the enforcement of binary gender on societies that did not usually identify peoples by their physical bodies.

Matrilineality and Heterarchy Versus Colonialism

Distinct from tribal, ethnic and racial category impositions but no less consequential, colonial representatives in the BMZ ignored the fact that mothers and grandmothers held positions of leadership in African societies. This meant that established and legitimate female leaders, and the institutions they participated in were commonly overlooked, disregarded, and marginalized. Patriarchal biases rooted in European biology-based gender binary meant that, for better or worse, women were largely excluded from any colonial opportunities to improve their standing in the emerging colonial order.

Leadership was not necessarily a gendered role, especially in the agricultural equity democracies of the BMZ. Among the Bemba who were not part of the N'gandu polity, the word for leader was *imfumu*, and for at least the last two thousand years prior to colonialism this term meant 'a non-gendered person in charge' and comes from a very old Bantu root (Ehret, 1998). In the Bemba dictionaries collected prior to colonialism, missionaries wrote that *namfumu* was a "woman chief" and *shamfumu* was a 'male chief,' though probably the correct translation should have been 'mother chief' and 'father chief,' respectively. Once British colonialists took over the area, they changed the meaning. They used the term *imfumu* to represent a male leader and *namfumu* to represent a female leader, assuming leadership was normally male and that when it was not, it needed to be clearly designated as a woman chief (Rasing, 2004, pp. 28–30)." Thus, the colonial government saw the term *imfumu* as a male gendered term, when in fact it was non-gendered and needed a prefix to indicate mother leader or father leader.

The colonial powers did not understand or care that people of the BMZ usually respected authority based on life stages, seniority, and particular roles within their societies. Once the Bantu-speaking populations were divided into two unequal genders, binary gender began to define every aspect of the people's lives. For example, further south in Eswatini, there had been indigenous, traditional courts in which both the ruler and the

Queen mother had equal authority. By 1907 an Eswatini administration proclamation established that women be removed and replaced with all male colonial courts. Queen Labotsibeni fought for a reversal but failed. The Swazi people viewed the position of Queen mother as very significant, while the colonialist saw the queen as just an African woman with no rights to make decisions (Booth, 1992).

Historian Margaret Strobel writes about the early colonial period in East Africa that colonial governments paid male leaders, but consciously excluded female leaders (Strobel, 1982, p. 515). This was true in other areas. Within the developing cash economies, the concept that only labor paid for in cash was of value, those now designated as women became marginalized. This created a major cultural shift since females' labor was not compensated for in cash, yet essential for survival. The creation of colonial policy and courts proved challenging for all precolonial African leaders, but those who were women within a biology-based gender identity framework were particularly excluded and the consequences of the colonial period has shaped their experiences today within the African nation state.

While no African families conformed to European ideals, it was the matrilineal family that was the most difficult for colonials and missionaries to rationalize or control. For example, key elements of matrilineal organization such as brideservice, processual marriage; identity from one's mother and the concept that the closest male relative to a child was their maternal uncle not their father were considered aberrations of normal family structures and definite signs of some sort of primordial backwardness. Matrilineality confused and irritated colonial officials as this description by Portuguese colonial anthropologist, da silva Rego of matrilineal families in Mozambique indicates:

> *in the north it is the woman who dominates the family. The husband must leave his own village in order to marry. If the marriage does not work out, he must leave, and the woman can remarry. This is naturally unacceptable by Christian standards, but women take pride in the system and they fight against change.* (Arnfred, 2011, p. 122)

He adds that women may think this is a form of liberation, but he quickly explained this is not the case because "true emancipation of the woman is for her to be part of a Christian family with the man as the natural head of the family and the woman at his side" (Ibid.). Da Silva Rego's observations of matrilineality are repeated in colonial writings found throughout BMZ, especially when Europeans were confronted with institutions such

as processual marriage and brideservice in which a potential husband must come and work for the mother-in-law in order to marry. Steeped in the European concept of binary gender, colonialists concluded that the only real liberation for those categorized as women was by accepting their roles as wives subordinate to the patriarch of the family.

Matriliny was antithetical to early twentieth century European ideals. Colonialists were especially bothered by having to negotiate with grandmothers. Thus, colonial anthropologist began to search for 'a man in charge' and the obvious candidate was the maternal uncle. They began to claim that traditionally he was the patriarch of the *mbumba* or sororal group. The fact that this was not their role within the matrilineal family historically did not seem to deter anthropologists' need to create this mythical male leader. An example of how colonial assumptions distorted and elevated the position of maternal uncles can be found in how colonialists in Zambia and Malawi translated the term for maternal uncle, *nkhoswe*, as guardian and patriarch of the *mbumba*. They did not understand that the title for maternal uncle was derived from the word *-khoswe*, a rat. Its real meaning, according to Chewa and Nyanja peoples is, "a rat when seated on an earthen pot, which deters one from killing or shooting it, since in trying to do so one runs the risk of destroying the pot as well" (Mbaya, 2016, p. 174). Interestingly it is the *mbumba* or earthen pot that protects the rat, not the other way around. *Nhoswe* meant a symbiotic relationship between sisters and their brothers. At times brothers may have played the role of protector, but as the meaning of this word indicates, often the *mbumba* protected the brother. As historian Mandala notes:

> *The position of the nkhoswe of the Manganja has changed considerably since the mid-19th century the nkhoswe of the time did not by any means represent the embodiment of male dominance, as most 20th century interpreters of similarly organized communities have assumed.* (Mandala, 1990, p. 22)

There was an extreme need of British colonial anthropologists and officials to build up male authority in matrilineal communities. In part this was due to the androcentric nature of early twentieth century anthropologists, but it also represented their inability to understand the dynamics of these matrilineal communities.

Both binary gender categories and patriarchy or male supremacy were contested ideologies within the BMZ, but another feature of matrilineal communities was that of heterarchy as a philosophy for distribution of authority and goods. Colonial economies, by their very nature, were

hierarchical with its vertical allocation of power between non-Africans and Africans, and between men and women based philosophically on European beliefs in Social Darwinism that argued the superiority of European humans over African humans; and the European gender binary philosophy which encouraged anatomical-based disparities between them. Colonial institutions challenged the heterarchical authority of the sororal *mbumba* and family-controlled economic activities.

Wage Labor and Cash Cropping Versus Matrilineality

The motivation for colonialism at its core was economic exploitation. Therefore, African labor whether on plantations, in mines or growing cash crops was essential to the stability and profitability of the imperialist projects. Initially, colonialists and missionaries assumed that Africans would gladly work for the colonial government if paid a small wage. Of course, they were wrong, since matrilineal Bantu-speaking people throughout the BMZ preferred to stay home, farm their land, and remain part of their lineal families and cultures. The challenges presented by wage labor were true for both patrilineal and matrilineal societies. Yet as arduous as wage labor was for males, in a patrilineal society a young male and his family may find wage labor as an alternative way to gather bridewealth, so there was some benefit in it for them. The real problem for colonialists in both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland was Bantu matrilineal societies. Marriage in a matrilineal family involved brideservice which during the early colonial period was often seven to ten years in East-Central Africa. During brideservice a young male must work for his future mother-in-law and father a few children to be accepted as a husband. Brideservice and *chisungu*, female initiation, were core institutions of matrilineal families and the source of authority for the sororal group. It is valuable to also consider the tensions that emerged over authority held within cosmic family system by mothers-in-law and the colonial government.

Once colonialism was established there were policies that were enacted to force primarily male Africans to work for them. Mandala's excellent history on the Lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi is an example of their struggle to secure labor among matrilineal peoples. British colonial officials found it difficult to find people willing to work because "under the institution of *chikamwin*, bride service, Mang'anja boys did not need cash in order to marry" (Mandala, 1984, p. 139). The British believed this was due to

'laziness' as stated in the 1931 colonial annual report for Chikwawa region in Malawi which stated:

> *Local employers have always declared the Amanganja to be lazy and unwilling and his reputation for work has been thoroughly bad. They are more loath to leave their homes and labour a field or submit to discipline than many tribes.* (Ibid., p. 108)

British colonialists referred to many other matrilineal peoples in the same tone. For young males, their desire to do brideservice, become a father and marry was their obligation to their families and were not interested in wage labor.

To the west of Nyasaland was the colony of Northern Rhodesia where there were huge deposits of copper and poor soil. In the region aptly called the Copperbelt, British colonial officials attempted to force African males to work in the copper mines. But the Copperbelt is in the center of a large matrilineal region and just as in Nyasaland, young males were not interested in working for European colonialists. Once again, colonial officials battled over who would control young men's labor with mothers-in-law. To entice male labor Northern Rhodesian colonial officials allowed husbands to bring their wives and children to the mining area and mining officials even provided small houses for them, which is quite different from the workers living conditions in Southern African male dormitories. This policy helped secure some male labor, but they still had to contend with processual marriages and brideservice.

British officials needed more workers and decided that the only way to combat matrilineal marriage institutions and secure young male labor was to enforce new marriage laws. Their new policy toward marriage involved a marriage contract that could only be secured by the payments of *mpango*, which came to mean bridewealth. Since bridewealth was not an institution among matrilineal peoples at the time, this was an attempt by colonial authorities to force the local matrilineal peoples to adopt patrilineal principals (Rasing, 2004). The hope was that these new marriage laws would end brideservice and weaken the hold of mothers-in-law and the sororal group. To further challenge the matrilineal family, they implemented another rule that required the future husband to pay for the *chisungu*. *Chisungu*, as discussed previously, was female initiation and was part of a young woman's education overseen by the sororal group. Under the new rules along the Copperbelt, *chisungu* had become synonymous with male

rights to sexual intercourse of the young future wife. These new regulations effectively removed the authority of the sororal group over all aspects of marriage, thus, eliminating the sororal group's control of production and reproduction.

To make marrying with *mpango* more appealing, it was determined that only couples with the new marriage certificates could have access to mining housing. Colonialists desired to break the connection between the young husband and his wife's matrilineage so that he would work in the copper mines and not in his mother-in-law's field. To a certain degree the colonial intervention worked, at least temporarily. While it definitely made it harder for mothers-in-law to have authority over marriage, it did not end it as some court records from the Copperbelt indicate:

> *The wife states, 'I have brought my husband, Kotoni before the Court so that we can divorce simply because he does not clothe me and he does not dig for my parents'. The husband states, 'I agree that I do not dig, but I do clothe the woman. The reason I do not dig is simply because whenever I quarrel with my wife, my mother-in-law says she will pay back the bride-price.'* (Harries-Jones 1965, 49)

Prospective mothers-in-law still had some access to resources; therefore, they had the ability to pay back bridewealth and maintain control of bride-service expectations. Thus, the battle for control of male labor continued well into the late colonial period and documented resistance demonstrates the resoluteness Bantu matrifamilies had for maintaining their family systems.

In areas where the soil was better and there were no mineral resources, cash cropping became an important source of income for European colonialism in matrilineal regions like Nyasaland (Malawi) and northern Mozambique. In both regions the results of cash cropping created unexpected results. For example, in the late precolonial period the European farmers in Nyasaland tried to institute forms of plantation labor with forced labor and little success. They decided on another tactic used since the arrival of Europeans in the 1880's through to the early colonial period was a type of "tribute" paid in labor to the European farmers, who called it *thangata*. European farmers had massive plantations that they called estates with few matrilineal Bantu peoples wanting to work on them. The Europeans were told of an old tradition of tribute called *thangata*, which in Chewa means "to assist," and decided this was a way to force Africans

to work on their land. In 1921 the Land Commission of Nyasaland wrote that the practice of *thangata* seems to have deep historical roots in Chewa society, and it did (Kandawire, 1977). *Thangata* in the eighteenth century and earlier represented a reciprocal institution in which families would help other families with building a house or perform special work on each other's farms. In the nineteenth century there were large influxes of other matrilineal peoples into the region and *thangata*'s meaning broadened to include work done for the local leading family in return for remaining on their land (Ibid.). European farmers recycled *thangata* to justify taking people's land and forcing them now to pay rent in order to live and farm on their previous land. Since few African farmers had cash, the "tribute" to the European plantation owners was a percentage of their labor. Bantu matrifamilies were still not interested in a vassal/lord relationship on their own land, even if it was named after a local tradition.

Matrilineal families of Nyasaland found all kinds of ways to avoid working on these estates. In areas where there was land available, many who had learned to farm cotton on the estates, now grew both their food and cotton and competed successfully with the large European farms. In fact, they were so successful that by 1930 there were few large functioning European estates. So as the matrilineal peoples of the area were able to combat forced labor on the large farms, they became cash croppers. But they were unable to sell cotton directly to the world markets; instead, their products were controlled by monopolies such as the British Cotton Growing Association, which determined the price paid to sharecroppers for cotton (Mandala, 1990). When world prices for cotton were low, many cash cropping farmers suffered greatly.

Against all odds cotton cash croppers in Southern Nyasaland were able to eke out a living and sometimes even be quite successful at it especially after the downfall of the cotton estates. Cash cropping in Nyasaland was unique in that women farmers were also successful. According to historian Mandala there were several reasons for this. The first was that unlike other British colonies, Nyasaland was not so well organized and there was no specific training of men in cash cropping. So, women who controlled the technology of agriculture, would still be the most knowledgeable farmers. In 1909 the colonial government tried to push women out of cash cropping by demanding that cotton be grown alone and not with other crops, which would mean that female farmers who grew food crops would be excluded. This law was ignored and not enforced. Therefore, both female and male farmers could grow cotton interspersed with food crops and

matrilineal relations remained in terms of who benefited from the crops. In other parts of Africa male farmers were given an economic and sometimes technological advantage over women farmers, but in Nyasaland only European farmers could own such items as cotton gins.

During the early years of cash cropping in Nyasaland, only male farmers sold cotton to monopolies, but soon female relatives demanded to be taken along and receive money for the cotton they had produced. Tax collectors were always present during the selling of cotton crops so that they could collect the taxes. But the colonial government told tax collectors not to bother women farmers when they sold cotton. Once the Bantu matrilineal families of Nyasaland realized this, only women went to sell cotton. The patriarchal and binary gender ideologies of the colonial powers actually impeded their ability to collect taxes. The matrifocal basis of the rural farming families in this region encouraged collective farming and fair distribution of the proceeds; the lack of colonial interest in training men for cash cropping and their belief that women should not be taxed because they were not "breadwinners" of the family meant that cash cropping in this region did not seriously challenge the equality of male and female farmers in the matrilineal regions of Nyasaland.

This equity in cash cropping contrasts with the experiences of Sena farmers, a patrilineal Bantu-speaking peoples residing in northwestern Nyasaland, where males were able to assume dominant position in cotton cash cropping. Polygamous husbands grew cotton with help of farm laborers who were fed by the food produced in the fields of their wives. The husband would often then sell the cotton and spend the money on bridewealth so that he could marry another woman. The more wives he had; the more food was produced which meant that the husband could employ more workers to grow cotton. Sena husbands rarely would share their profits with their wives. Eventually the wives rebelled and began demanding divorces. Among the Sena the successful male farmers were able to dominate the Bantu patrifamily and the relationship between male and female farmers seemed to be permanently changed (Mandala, 1990).

In northern Mozambique, a matrilineal region of the country, there was a great need for farmers to grow cotton. As female labor requirements increased, they simultaneously lost status, in the new colonial dominated environment as they became classified as "women." Colonial policy in northern Mozambique is an excellent example of a major contradiction between the need to create 'African housewives' and their practical need for those female farmers to grow cash crops and this allowed for those in

the north to retain matrilineal worldviews and institutions under Portuguese colonialism

In Mozambique, European colonialists attempted to grow cotton cash crops, but instead of trying to make the people work on estates or as peasant farmers, they used forced labor or *chibalo*. As early as the mid-eighteenth-century Portugal had decided to make both Angola and Mozambique cotton producing regions. Actual cotton production started at the end of the nineteenth century when Portugal finally brought all of the regions that are considered part of modern Mozambique under their control. Between the 1890s and the 1930s, Portuguese colonialism attempted to produce cotton in Mozambique by giving various companies, colonial bureaucrats and settlers the right to exploit the land and the people on it. The matrilineal northern Mozambique ironically was the best region for growing cotton, but an area where throughout Portuguese colonialism cotton production was the lowest. There are various reasons for this including mass migration out of northern Mozambique to Nyasaland where some people had extended members of their clan who had migrated to the region much earlier; clever ways of sabotaging cotton crops; and finally employing matrilineal organization when possible.

Portuguese rule in Mozambique until the 1930's was characterized by the exploitation of Bantu-speaking families and resources by private parties, who often modeled their rule on the infamous Belgian Congo rubber production strategy. In 1924 an American sociologist, Edward Alsworth Ross, wrote about the treatment of women under *chibalo* forced labor:

> *Women, even pregnant or with a nursing infant, are taken. The term is from one week to five but a woman may be called out again in the same year. Others in the village bring food to them, in some cases a day's journey away. Girls as young as fifteen are taken and some are made to submit sexually to those in charge. They work under a black foreman who uses a stick. They begin work at six, stop an hour at noon and work till sunset. There are miscarriages from heavy work.* (Isaacman, 1992, p. 492)

In addition to the horrendous treatment of Mozambican women, this report also documents how women in the villages would walk a whole day to make sure the young mothers had food. This speaks to the strong matrilineal bond in the north where motherhood was always supported.

By 1926 most of the cotton growing schemes had failed due to opposition from African farmers, a shortage of capital, world market cotton

prices, and uncertain rainfall. In the same year there was an army coup in Portugal that eventually led to the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar, who ruled from 1933 to 1968. Salazar's government consolidated control of cotton production which meant the colonial state took the growing of cotton away from individual companies or persons. This new economic organization did not end forced labor and in some cases intensified it. In 1938 the Portuguese imposed an even more repressive policy:

> *Within four years more than 700,000 peasants had been forced to grow cotton. Although other European colonial governments had introduced similar schemes, no cotton project in all of Africa was built upon a more repressive work regime nor was more completely predicated upon state intervention at the point of production than in Mozambique. For more than two decades intimidation, coercion and terror were synonymous with cotton.* (O'Laughlin, 2000, p. 7)

There are oral traditions among the Makonde and Makua of northern Mozambique which tell of their difficult escape to Nysaland (Isaacman et al., 1980). Colonial records show that in addition to migrating, they also wanted to thwart cotton production in their region. In 1928, Bantu matrifamilies set fire to their homes before migrating out of Portuguese control (Ibid.). A cotton field agent in the Mutarara region of Zambesia noted that between 1956 and 1957, some 500 of the 2200 registered cotton producers had slipped across the border into Nyasaland. In 1944 in the Niassa district (in northern Mozambique) cotton overseers, in northern Mozambique, registered 7447 cotton producers, but later had to admit that there were much fewer farmers since "just prior to the planting season many of the peasants fled to Niassaland" (Ibid., p. 499). Even though the land was excellent for growing cotton, Northern Mozambique was considered the least significant part of the colony, and there were fewer military patrols in the region.

Northern Mozambique was unique from the rest of the colony, because there was less male migrant labor than in Central and Southern Mozambique where women bore the brunt of cotton production. In the north whole families worked in the fields. Around 1940 a husband and his wife had to cultivate the same cotton production plot. By 1944 the amount of land that had to be cultivated for cotton doubled. In northern Mozambique, husband-wife work teams working on a conjugal plot constituted the principal unit of production (Ibid.). In regions as diverse as

the rich cotton zone of Mogovolas and the marginal Makonde highlands, these teams initially constituted 90% of the labor force. Children worked both in the cotton fields and in the family, food gardens since the government attempted to enforce a nuclear family economic unit and patrilocal marriages. Those managers of cotton production assigned sons plots with their fathers (Manghezi, 1983). Thus, methods of land tenure and how groups working together were forcibly changed in the cotton-growing areas of the north, even though Portuguese colonialists knew from early ethnographic reports how family life was organized matrilineally. Against all odds, the people of northern Mozambique maintained their matrilineal institutions since prospective sons-in-law were often required to work in the cotton fields as part of their brideservice responsibilities and replaced the conjugal work unit (Davison, 1997).

Even though there were not so many Portuguese soldiers in the north, African police, *sepia*, would monitor the growing process, punishing people who did not weed enough and other perceived farming transgressions. Around 1945–47, cotton company officials complained that in northern Mozambique, the Makonde, Macomia, Marrupa, and Manganja consistently planted cotton very late in the season. The colonial regime just thought that it was symbolic of "uneconomic nature of the Mozambican peasant." Bantu farmers were accused of being lazy and ignorant, but in fact they were doing it on purpose to make a smaller cotton crop, yet the Portuguese were so sure it was just how these Africans were and like the British just thought it was laziness.

The matrilineal families in northern Mozambique continued to leave and sabotage the cotton fields, but for those who had to stay, the situation was often grim. The forced labor coupled with low world cotton prices and little time or land to grow food, meant that famine was always a possibility. According to historian, Alan Isaacman:

> *Food shortages occurred with great regularity, and there was hardly a time, especially during the first fifteen years of forced cotton production, when famines were not noted by the colonial authorities and contemporary observers. In 1951, between 3,000 and 4,000 cotton producers were reported to have died of famine in Mogvolas in northern Mozambique.* (Isaacman et al., 1980, p. 593)

During the time of forced labor on cotton fields, Makonde, who were known for their wood sculptures, changed their style and started making

images of very thin humans hunched over with the burden of growing cotton. Both Makonde and Makhua wood artists of northern Mozambique carved contorted and ugly images of the cotton bosses and the local African police (Isaacman, 1992).

There was certainly evidence that the Portuguese colonial power understood the basics of matrilineality, yet chose to ignore it. Since there was not a massive male migration in northern Mozambique, colonial officials decided that the "conjugal" or nuclear family would be the work unit. Their economic policies violated matrilineal policies. Yet during the entire time of cotton production, potential husbands found themselves growing cotton for the future wife's matrifamily to fulfill their processual marriage responsibilities. Therefore, the actual working unit in the area might include sons-in-law as well as daughters. Many of those who chose migration out of Mozambique had matrilineal kin already settled in other areas with whom they shared a metaphorical womb. The belief of Bantu cosmic families united in one "womb" meant that they would receive help from their extended family and aid them in transitioning to the new colony. While official Portuguese policy viewed matrilineality as backward, there was not an attempt by colonialists to change marriage laws or struggle against the institution of brideservice. Portuguese economic policies encouraged the use of vicious tactics toward cotton production, but they employed a *laissez-faire* attitude toward cultural aspects of northern Mozambique as long as cotton was produced.

The colonial policies of the British and the Portuguese toward cotton cash cropping were different. The British in Nyasaland did not have the military forces to impose strict rule on the matrilineal cash cropping families, whereas the Portuguese had the forces, but did not concentrate them in the matrilineal region of northern Mozambique. In both matrilineal regions the matrifamily innovated ways to survive and as a result were able to maintain matrilineality.

Cult of Domesticity and New Patriarchs

In the colonial context, Christian missions and colonial education were two interconnected institutions deployed to propound new, 'civilizing' ideologies, while the Cult of Domesticity ideology separated the public from the private and encouraged women to be housewives within a nuclear

family with the father as the head. This approach to family life was aimed at middle- and upper-class women in Europe, yet it was also key to colonial policies toward the family and females in particular. European intellectuals used the values of the cult of domesticity to explain that patriarchy which was fundamental to European society was an aspect of "civilization," and thus should be exported to colonial peoples.

Educating the young into the new world order of colonialism was another way for missionaries and colonialists to create a deep divide between African culture and social institutions and those that represented the Western concept of modernity. Prior to and during the early colonial periods from the 1890's to World War I, missionaries opened up schools for Africans. These schools usually required that all students become Christians in order to attend and those classified as boys were more heavily recruited than those labeled girls. Parents who understood that in this new world order education was the main way for their children to succeed, likely sent them.

Thus, mission education had various motivations: it was designed to encourage young women to become dutiful mothers and wives within the newly imposed African nuclear family; and to prepare women for second class citizenship within the new colonial world order. The emerging expectations and aspirations communicated as appropriate gender roles and virtues were being explicitly laid out and later codified under colonial rule. Historian Nancy Rose Hunt writes about similar types of missionary education in the Congo (DRC) under Belgian colonialism, where curriculums were "focused on female students to introduce Christian values and proper mothering into their [nuclear] families." The expectation was that female students would be trained as ideal Christian wives and mothers (Hunt, 1990, p. 454).

Missionaries were obsessed with preventing pre-marital pregnancies. In a Bantu patrilineal region, they may have had some success with this, since patrilineal marriage secures the productive abilities of the young wife through the payment of bridewealth. But missionaries soon discovered that prevention of premarital pregnancy in matrilineal regions was more difficult to achieve. Matrilineal marriage was a process and not a singular event, therefore throughout the years of brideservice a young woman was expected to have a few children and become mothers before the marriage

was finalized by the sororal group. As long as a future mother had been initiated, the pregnancy was welcomed wherever the stage of the marital process.

During the period between the World Wars, colonial states took over the major job of educating Africans and these colonial schools eventually replaced many of the missionary ones. Some scholars have claimed that European style education was a major contribution and possibly the only one, given to Africans by colonialism. Many others disagree, especially African scholars. Ali A. Abdi, a professor of education and indigenous knowledge, writes that without colonial education the political and economic policies would have been more thoroughly challenged by Africans (Abdi, 2011). The new education system taught the young that their African worldviews and institutions were backward and primitive.

Crucial to Eurocentric education in Africa was an emphasis on proper binary gender roles for all African students. Part of the motivation was that there was a serious need for African males who could read and write for lower-level positions within the colonial governments. Additionally, missionaries and colonial educators were convinced that for Africans to become modern, they had to accept European concepts of gender. These binary gender roles enhanced the status of western educated males. Therefore, colonial and missionary education helped to create a Western educated male elite who would be expected to lead households in the image of the patriarchal father of the homelands of their occupiers. Later, many of these elite males would become important in the independence movements and later in the newly independent African governments. They believed binary gender categories were part of the necessary path toward modernization for post-independent African societies.

Matrilineality and African Liberation Movements

Many of the leaders of the independence movements tried to liberate themselves from the western education, but in a world controlled by the West, they needed that education to function. Particularly in issues related to gender, the Western approach to women's liberation appeared to be the only path they saw ahead. The progressive African Liberation movements were essential in the ending of colonialism, but rarely understood or approved of the ways women had power during the earlier times.

In Mozambique Frelimo led a successful independence struggle and civil war against Portugal. Anthropologist Arnfred, based on her extensive research in northern Mozambique, examined how Frelimo leaders felt that it was their duty to liberate "women." In their attempt to do this, as Marxists, they analyzed the oppression of women through a Western, binary gendered lens. The result was that after independence Frelimo and the newly formed women's organization, Organization of Mozambican Women (OMW) launched campaigns against bridewealth, polygamy and initiation ceremonies, arguing that all these institutions found in 'traditional society' were backward and harmful to women (Arnfred, 2011). Women of northern Mozambique argued against preventing female initiation, "Frelimo has done so many nice things for us, why do they want us to stop performing initiation? They are our tradition. We have always taught our daughters in that way." They added, "Frelimo wants us to dance at district headquarters on national holidays, but they prevent us from dancing for our daughters." Even matrilineal Muslim Yao argued against ending female initiation by claiming it was based on Islamic principles. "Our Islamic religion taught us the initiation rites (Ibid., pp. 167–68)".

The mothers and granddaughters of northern Mozambique understood that by banning initiation ceremonies, they also would eliminate a major basis for their authority. The missionaries had demanded an end to female initiation, so it went underground, and under Frelimo, it again had to be done in the bush away from prying eyes. During the civil war 1977 to 1992, Renamo, the movement supported by the racist governments of South Africa and Rhodesia, did not try to change any cultural traditions, therefore some in the north of the country supported them. Evidence of this is found in the testimony of Yamaruzu, senior woman of authority from a prominent matrifamily of northern Mozambique who claimed that "Frelimo caused the land to burn" (O'Laughlin, 2000, p. 31). Before Frelimo, she argued, when people saw senior figures of the matrilineage they would show respect, but now they just make fun of her when she passes (Dinerman, 1994, p. 586). Whether her testimony represented the attitude of most people in northern Mozambique towards Renamo is unclear. But the various testimonies of those mothers and grandmothers show how strongly they wanted to maintain matrilineal family institutions. After the Civil War the Frelimo government in Mozambique lost interest in these campaigns, and public ceremonies were reinstated.

Most other liberation movements had the same attitude toward matrilineal institutions and toward African females, even those who fought in the struggle against colonialism, who were not well educated in Western ideology. Historian Susan Geiger writes about the women who helped TANU win independence in Tanganyika yet were removed from any leadership in women's organizations. She writes that once the new government of Tanganyika (later to be Tanzania) decided to form positions of leadership in organizations dedicated to "women's concern," only those who conformed to Western concepts of domesticity were eligible. In the new women's organization after independence positions of leadership were:

> *not to go to those women whose efforts had constituted the backbone of nationalist mobilization. Rather, they went to that handful of women whose training in Western domestic science, nursing, cookery, sewing and child/maternal health had established them, from at least the mid-1950s as a minority class above and apart. Educated women were now called upon to offer their "less fortunate" sisters sewing lessons in place of politics, and domestic science and adult literacy in place of personal consciousness-raising.* (Geiger, 1987, p. 25)

Females played decisive roles in the liberation struggles, but once independence was gained, they, in varying degrees, were expected to conform to roles determined by imposed Western values and not their own. This dichotomy between those Western educated women who see 'liberation of African women' in Western feminist terms and those who attempt to maintain their authority based on institutions rooted in African history. Precolonial social institutions were viewed as symbols of backwardness by Western educated elite who would be the leaders of independent Africa.

Matriliny in Post-colonial Africa

Currently there is a resurgence of research on matriliny in Bantu-speaking Africa and hopefully in the next few years there will be many volumes written on the subject. Therefore, the conclusion to this history will just be a few vignettes showing how resilient matriliny has been since independence.

The first takes place in Luapula, Zambia, a region that has a long border with the DRC, and the matrilineal peoples who live there were split from their relatives on the other side of the border. Karla Poewe, an anthropologist spent many years in the 1970's researching and writing about the

matrilineal peoples of the area. She spent time in Zambia after independence and was able to document how those who still maintained matrilineal worldviews would adjust their institutions to survive in a market driven economy. Early post-independent Zambia was a time when the newly independent Zambian government was enthusiastically trying to change the economic base of the country. After independence there was a push for the creation of locally owned small businesses and in Luapula that usually meant catching, processing, or selling fish. Poewe observed that two types of business models developed during this period. Those who had converted to Protestant Christianity, usually Jehovah's Witness or Seventh Day Adventist, tended to create nuclear family-owned businesses. Conversely those families that retained their matrilineal social organization and worldviews created collective enterprises based on maternal cosmic families. Both types of businesses accepted the new capitalist, market-based economics. The Protestant nuclear family enterprises were based on a vertical, linear hierarchical model, while those based on the matrifocal family utilized a horizontal, heterarchical strategy. Both were originally successful, but after time the nuclear family-owned businesses either became huge with foreign capital or failed due to lack of family support (Poewe, 1980) The matrilineal family-based enterprises were able to maintain their businesses for a long time, in part, because of the many relatives involved in it. Poewe's study shows how adaptive matrilineal ideology can be to change. In the context of new forms of capitalist enterprise, these families were able to maintain that concept of all-in-one womb, compete as entrepreneurs, and maintain their own form of distributive justice.

The next vignettes look at the resilience of female initiation within the BMZ. People in rural areas in northern Mozambique, who had lived close enough to missionaries who disapproved of female initiation or later when Frelimo tried to stop initiation ceremonies, learned to live in two worlds. They looked like good Christians or good Frelimo comrades, yet they just waited until school holidays or evenings to perform the ceremonies. Arnfred in the 1990's was still able to observe female initiation ceremonies in Northern Mozambique (Arnfred, 2011). Jean Davision also writes that in Southern and central Malawi during 1989–1992 female initiation was celebrated out in the open and she was able to attend two of them. Davison interviewed a young woman from Chancellor College at Zomba, Malawi, whose parents had not allowed her to attend. She believed if she had

participated in female initiation, "I would have learned more about my culture, myself (Davison, 1997, pp. 45–46)." This interview with a well western educated woman, indicates the deep historical significance of this ceremony for all of the matrilineal Bantu families in this part of the BMZ.

Thera Rasings' research discovered that in 1992 female initiation was still celebrated in the Copperbelt, Zambia. Apparently against all the colonial attempts at preventing initiation ceremonies, they were still very important to most potential mothers, mothers and grandmothers. Even young women who wanted to become nuns were required to first go through female initiation (Rasing, 2004). Rasing noticed that women in the Copperbelt of Zambia would be good Christian women, while also maintaining female initiation ceremonies in secret (Ibid.).

Twenty years later in Mbala, Northern Zambia, Victoria Phiri, museum director and scholar, and I went to a church service of the United Church of Zambia, where there were two distinct choirs, one of mixed ages and genders in the blue robes of this church, but the other choir was exclusively of older females in red, white and black outfits. The older female's choir found out that we were interested in the history of women's authority in the area. As we were leaving the church, they grabbed our hands and told us to come to Wednesday night choir practice. When we arrived, the doors were closed, but we were let in. And to our astonishment they were practicing female initiation dances and songs in addition to the hymns. In this area at the time the local churches were opposed to female initiation, therefore the ceremonies were done out in secret, out in the bush. These women led initiation ceremonies and were practicing their songs and dances as part of choir practice were comfortable in both their Christian identity and their role as leaders of female initiation. In 2023, while traveling around Zambia, older women dressed in red, white and black could be seen along the roads on their way to church or choir practice.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has proven that in modern Africa there is still a Bantu Matrilineal Zone (BMZ) in which communities have been able to retain their matrilineal heritage. The BMZ has been identified as a large region--extending from Angola and Namibia on the west through the Democratic

Republic of the Congo east to Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania and then south to Mozambique. The chapter further argued that, while there are societies in the BMZ who currently favor paternal clans over matriclans, one can still find even in very patrilineal communities, remnants of a matrilineal past. Thus, the chapter has shown that the cosmic family, matrilineality, heterarchy, and non-binary gender categories have a deep history in Africa as well illustrated in the Bantu Matrilineal Zone. The chapter looked specifically at the history of matrilineal communities within the BMZ during the last five hundred years. The chapter has shown that some traditions and beliefs were transformed, and some appear to have disappeared. Yet, underneath the superficiality of the last five hundred years, basic Bantu epistemologies may be hidden, but remain if scholars are willing to listen to Africans and search for them. Motherhood and mothers for over three thousand years have been central to Bantu-speaking peoples' identity and continue to be so in the BMZ.

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PART II

Precolonial Period

CHAPTER 3

Matrilineality, Women Power and the Matriarchs of Precolonial Southern Africa

Maxwell Musingafi, *Pascalinah Morongoenyane Mokhothu*, *and Mokone Musi*

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we revisit African archives on matrilineality and sample matriarchs in Southern Africa. In matrilineal societies like the Ovango, Chewa, Tonga, and Yombe of Southern Africa, inheritance is by female lineage and the family lineage is traced through the female side so that children take their mother's name. Not knowing the father of a child does not carry the stigma it does in patrilineal societies since children belong to their mother's household. Defining relation and identity in terms of a female ancestor means that decisions about who is or is not a relative are made in relation to the female line. The senior male relative in a matrilineal system is most often the mother's brother. Women own the group's property; and the essential family bond is between brothers and sisters,

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especially because the brother's children also inherit from their aunts. When daughters marry, their husbands become a part of the matrilineal group and live with the wife's family in the *matrilocal residence*. Matriarchal societies are those headed by women with females holding the primary power positions in the control of politics, resources, and property. Although marriage was and is still important in matrilineal societies as much as it was and is in patrilineal societies, in precolonial matrilineal society it was women who had agency of sex and their bodies and they could have as many husbands as they wanted at the same time.

It is however, important to note that simply being matrilineal does not imply being matriarchal as a society can be matrilineal without being matriarchal and vice versa. In this chapter, although we dedicate the first section on matrilineality and the distinction with matriarch thereof, the main focus is on the neglected precolonial matriarchs' narratives of Southern Africa including Queen Anna de Sousa Nzinga of Angola, the spiritual prophetess and warrior Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana of Zimbabwe and prophetess 'Mantsopa of Lesotho. Data is gathered through oral traditions and document analysis to examine the lives of these great Southern African matriarchs and their inspirational influence to modern day African feminism.

3.2 Matrilineality and Women Power

Several matrilineal cultures exist today in Southern Africa, among them the Kung San of the Kalahari Desert, the Ovango of Namibia, the Tonga of Zimbabwe and Zambia, the Luapula of Zambia, the Yombe of DRC, the Balobedu of South Africa, the Chewa of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. Matrilineality, one kind of unilineal family organisation, is defined as a form of social organisation in which inheritance and ways of forming identity follow a maternal bloodline, and all children belong to their mother's lineage (Saidi, 2020). The term derives from the Latin *Mater* or mother and *linea* meaning "thread" (Stone, 2005). Another term for matrilineal descent is *uterine* kinship (ibid). The other kind of unilineal group is patrilineality in which family relationship is determined according to one's descent from the father's lineage. While both the terms matrilineality and patrilineality are used to describe African social institutions by outsiders, they do reflect a social reality that most African societies tend to determine their identity through either their mother or father (Saidi, 2020). *Amilateral* or *bilateral* kinship systems are those in which

both matrilineal and patrilineal lines of descent are relevant to determining family relations, social identity, and the inheritance of property and other privilege (Stone, 2005). Studies have shown that matrilineality is more than inheritance or identity and represents particular worldviews within precolonial African societies (Poewe, 1981). For example, in matrilineal societies, metaphors of childbirth or motherhood were linked with how lineages were organised politically, socially, and economically, and motherhood-specific terminologies are pervasive in oral traditions and the naming of clans (Poewe, 1981).

When a culture defines relation and identity in terms of a female ancestor, then decisions about who is or is not a relative are made in relation to the female line (Stone, 2005). The senior male relative in a matrilineal system is most often the mother's brother. Women own the group's property; and the essential family bond is between brothers and sisters, especially because the brother's children also inherit from their aunts (Fox, 1983). In matrilineal cultures, when daughters marry, their husbands become a part of the matrilineal group and live with the wife's family (Saidi, 2020; Stone, 2005; Parkin & Stone, 2004). This is called *matrilocal residence* (Saidi, 2020). Fox (1983) identified three types of matrilineal systems: the mother-daughter-sister system, a system related to matrilocality in which women hold more resources and have higher status; the brother-sister-nephew system that often practices avunculocal (for which the transfer of the marital residence is in the house or the village of the wife's brother) which is associated with a lower women status; and a mixed system between these relationships in which women's status would be neither too high nor too low.

Studies have shown that matrilineal societies tend to encourage the unity of clans, lineages, or communities based on a metaphorical womb that represents a well-protected community with the potential to nourish and feed everyone (Poewe, 1981). The matrilineage or matriclan comprises a community of people united by blood or specific social ties to a common woman ancestor. The matrilineage establishes an economy based on the philosophical tenets of dispersing or sharing, so that within matrilineal societies individuals rarely accumulate surplus, but distribute surplus widely to both close and distant relatives (Saidi, 2020). While this can be found in patrilineal societies, the tendency towards sharing in a wider orbit of people is more apparent in matrilineal societies (ibid). As Africans moved into areas that were less fertile or the weather less predictable, the tenet of wide distribution of any surplus to distant relatives helped ensure

their survival. While one area might have a failed crop, distant relatives often had a good crop and would share their good fortune and vice versa (ibid.).

It should be noted however, that being matrilineal does not automatically turn to being matriarchy. Matrilineality refers to kinship relations between child, parents, cousins and other blood and close relatives. Matriarchy refers to social, power, and political structures and relations between sexes (male and female). In the next section we turn to matriarchy and women power.

3.3 Matriarchy and Women Power

Matriarchy and matrilineality are two concepts that are centred on women. Nonetheless, as already hinted above, matrilineality is not the same as matriarchy and therefore the terms are not interchangeable. Matriarchy is a kind of social structure in which women hold the majority of authority. Where matrilineal refers to kinship with a female's lineage, matriarchal refers to a society that is primarily ruled by women. Therefore, a matrilineal society is a kinship system in which maternal rather than paternal lines are used to trace ancestral descent. Matriarchy is a social structure in which women possess the majority of power in areas such as political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and property control. Therefore, matrilineality does not automatically translate to matriarchy.

Marsden (2018) opines that the idea of women's rule seems alien, yet history dating back 1.5 million years ago shows examples of matriarchal societies some of which still exist today. She argues that there is a school of thought that believes human society was originally matriarchal, where women were revered as priestesses and honoured for their ability to bear children. There is also archaeological evidence, such as ancient Venus' statues, that seems to support this. However, somewhere around 3000 BC, the balance shifted, and some scholars believe society was thereafter dominated by men and patriarchy was thus born. For Marxists, matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy through the domestication of women and the coming of class society under historical phases of slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. For them only the earliest primitive communalist society (replaced by slavery) and the future highly developed communist society (taking over from socialism) ensure equitable distribution of resources and matriarchal power.

Using an African egalitarian perspective, Goettner-Abendroth (2003) observes that, in matriarchies, mothers are at the centre of culture without ruling over other members of society, but to follow maternal values, to nurture the natural, social, and cultural life based on mutual respect. As such, patriarchal power is power over others and matriarchy is power within. Using the same egalitarian African perspective, Edsell (2017) notes that in matriarchal societies, women live a more egalitarian lifestyle, with strong community bonds and a healthy bartering system that is supportive rather than exclusive; wise rather than merely strong. She views matriarchal societies as non-oppressive to men. Rather, they are a society that values instinct as much as intellect, receptivity as much as assertiveness, collaboration as much as individualism and empathy as much as objectivity. Edsell notes that in the elephant world, successful matriarchs are not self-appointed leaders of their family. They are leaders because their family respects them, and they are respected because they are proven over the years that they can be trusted to make wise decisions. Similarly, in the human world through the years, older females become repositories of social and ecological knowledge. Thus, natural leadership qualities and long experience combined are makings of a wise matriarch. We now turn to case studies of matriarchal leaders and powerful women in Southern Africa.

Queen Anna de Sousa Nzinga of Angola

Queen Anna de Sousa Nzinga of Angola is one of the most celebrated African women to resist European colonisation. Nzinga led four decades (1620s to 1660s) of warfare against the Portuguese in Angola. Her legacy is a controversial and paradoxical one, as she was a proto-nationalist resistance leader, a devout Christian and Portuguese ally, a superb but ruthless politician and a vicious slave trader. Despite these contradictions, what remains undisputed is Nzinga's skill as a negotiator and military strategist. She was directly responsible for limiting the Portuguese colony at Luanda to a few square miles (Collelo, 1991).

Ana de Sousa Nzinga was born in 1581 in Kabasa, the capital of the Kingdom of Ndongo (now Angola), which was ruled by a people called *Ngolas*. In 1571, a royal order from Lisbon declared that the kingdom of Ndongo be subjected and captured. The Portuguese had already converted the Kongo, a neighbouring people, and were after 'black ivory', that is slaves in Angola (Smith, 2005). Nzinga's father, *Ngola* (king)

Karensi, distrusted the European expansion and banned missionaries from his kingdom. This action resulted in a war of resistance that lasted 40 years.

Nzinga used to dress in men's clothing and was considered to be the best politician in the country. However, her strategies angered her brother, Mani, who became ruler after their father's death. In his anger, Nzinga's brother sterilised her and killed her only son. However, after suffering many defeats by the Portuguese, he later begged his sister for help, and Nzinga agreed to aid him to keep her people from being enslaved. As she spoke Portuguese, she was sent to negotiate a treaty, which was signed but not honoured (Smith, 2005).

There are conflicting accounts as to how Nzinga ascended to leadership. One account shows that after her negotiations with the Portuguese, Nzinga returned home, jailed her brother, declared herself *Ngola*, and issued her first orders (Smith, 2005). Another account notes that in 1624, Nzinga succeeded to the throne of Ndongo after her brother died under what some deem suspicious circumstances (Levin et al., 2000). After Nzinga had claimed the title of *Ngola*, she retreated eastward to Matamba, as a puppet *Ngola* had been put in her brother's place by the Portuguese after his death.

Nzinga had three main policy objectives. She wanted to stop the war between the Portuguese and her people, which was devastating the Luanda plateau. She wanted to obtain from the Portuguese the diplomatic recognition that had been accorded to the Kongo. She also wanted to establish a regular and profitable trading relationship between Luanda and Europeans. In the 1630s and 1640s, she forged an alliance with Dutch slave traders and used her wealth to consolidate her position. She also overcame traditional Mbande resistance to women in politics, employing Mbande refugees (runaway slaves) and others as mercenaries against local resistance where necessary. After continuous war against the Portuguese, she concluded a treaty with them that largely fulfilled her initial goals, and her policy continued successfully until her death.

Colonisation

Queen Nzinga lived and reigned in a time of colonial conquest and conflict between indigenous groups. The Portuguese had become preoccupied with the Ndongo Kingdom as a source of slaves and with expanding the colony of Angola. Early resistance to the colonial onslaught was offered by the Luanda, Matamba, and Kasanje kingdoms, which had

acquired strong positions through trading slaves for goods from the Americas. The Portuguese did not gain any real control during these initial attempts to govern their proclaimed colony, but did manage to establish a number of forts and other footholds to the east of Luanda. In an attempt to find easier routes to the interior and slaves, the Portuguese also moved southward, where a settlement had been established in Benguela in 1617. But there they met considerable resistance in the highlands from various Ovimbundu kingdoms. Slaves were mainly supplied by competing warlords from the Wambu, Mbailundu, and other Ovimbundu kingdoms. The slaves were sold for firearms and other imports, which preserved the power of the victors.

It was at this time that Nzinga was sent to Luanda in 1622 to discuss peace terms with the Portuguese governor there. As a necessary preliminary (which for a time won her Portuguese goodwill), she had herself baptised Dona Anna de Souza. In exchange for temporarily opening her country to missionaries and especially to the Portuguese slave trade, she managed to have a fortress that was located too close to her lands evacuated and certain chiefs whom the Portuguese had made their vassals freed. Most importantly, she won recognition of her dominion over Ndongo. The freed chiefs were probably little inclined to accept this, given the double handicap of Nzinga's questionable ascendance to political power and her sex.

In 1623, disappointed with the Portuguese, Nzinga broke with Christianity and allied herself with the Jaga, a marginal group of warriors recently arrived from the Southern Kwanza River plateaus. She also gave asylum to all fugitive slaves from Portuguese-controlled territory and induced *kimbare*s (African soldiers) trained by the Portuguese to join her army by promising them land and rewards. She led her men to infiltrate the Portuguese army to incite the Africans within it to desert. Thus, by the end of 1624, Nzinga was slowly gaining the military advantage. In 1625, she finally incited one vassal chief after another to rebel against the Portuguese and was then told that war would result if she did not return the soldiers and the fugitive slaves, but she categorically refused (Vansina, 1996). By now she had been able to increase her forces sufficiently and obtain adequate arms to plunge the kingdom into open warfare.

The Portuguese wanted to expel Nzinga and her followers and replace her with a monarch who would be subservient to their needs and wishes. Aided by perhaps most of the Mbande, the Portuguese managed to rout her, and this led to a protracted guerrilla war. They were eventually able to

force Nzinga off her throne and replace her with a puppet ruler. Nzinga went into exile and continued to work to convince her followers to destroy the usurper's rule and to expel the Portuguese who maintained him in power.

The Jaga's tactics helped to foil many Portuguese attempts to capture Nzinga dead or alive. In 1629, she consolidated her power as a *tembanza* (a Jaga title reserved for powerful women) by arranging a ritual marriage (actually a political alliance) with the Jaga's chief, the Kasanje (Levin et al., 2000). She later broke with the Jaga when they allied themselves with the Portuguese and came to pillage her capital.

Nzinga decided to conquer the kingdom of Matamba to the northeast. Matamba was one of the few places in the Southern Kongo and northern Kimbundu that had a history of women ruling. It was also the principal African slave-trading state in the Luanda region. Once in control there, Nzinga worked to develop strong ties with the Dutch to help her against the Portuguese, as well as for commercial and political reasons. Her goal was to remove the Portuguese from Angola altogether and have the Dutch as the European trading power on the coast.

Over the next few years, using a combination of ruthlessness and cleverness, Queen Nzinga was able to consolidate power in the Kimbundu territory of Ndongo and Matamba. Although often perceived as an outsider by Africans as well as Europeans because of her sex, she was able to manipulate her enemies and gather other outsiders around her to gain support to rule effectively. At times, she supported the slave trade from Africa to the Americas, but she also sometimes protected escaped slaves, in exchange for their loyalty. Matamba dominated the whole Kimbundu region, and after successfully fighting the Portuguese, Nzinga turned on her Dutch allies and defeated them as well. She then made a new alliance with the Portuguese so that she could export the slaves she had captured in war or received from her vassals. In 1656, she signed a peace treaty with the Portuguese governor of Angola and reconverted to Catholicism (Levin et al., 2000). Nzinga was able to keep the peace until her death at approximately 81 in 1663. She died a Catholic, and her deathbed was surrounded by the missionary advisers she had come to value in the last eight years of her life.

Nzinga's Legacy

Through her clever manipulations of the Portuguese, the Imbangala and the Dutch, Nzinga was able to dominate Kimbundu politics for 40 years. Her legacy is immense, if contradictory. First, she was a leader who could inspire her people to resist the Europeans. Second, she had unusual strength, and her role as a warrior and an anti-colonialist is an excellent example of the commitment of African women to values of self-reliance and survival. From the period of Nzinga's leadership to the present, African women have been at the forefront of resisting the militarism and the murderous tendencies of colonial economic relations and of social structures that privileged masculinity and violence. As to Nzinga's role as a slave trader, many either choose not to believe it or to simply accept it as part of her legacy (Collelo, 1991). One perspective on Nzinga's contradictions is that her quest to preserve the humanity of African people required her to develop a flexible and strategic identity (Palmberg, 1999).

Queen Nzinga's record as a military leader, diplomat, spiritual leader, and mother belie any simplistic conception of gender identities in African societies. She has a special position in Angolan history and is seen as an important root of African nationalism both because of her resistance to colonial rule and because of her success in breaking the regional power of the old ethnic provinces.

Mbuya Nehanda of Zimbabwe

The name Mbuya Nehanda is synonymous with a heroic and fearless warrior woman who gave her life for her people's freedom. As Beach (1998) notes "the figure of 'Mbuya Nehanda' has become the best-known popular symbol of resistance to colonial rule in modern Zimbabwe." According to Charumbira (2015) "Nehanda's power (and that of her mediums) came from older African historical epistemology that understood the world as feminine, governed by forces of fertility in nature. Indeed, life itself was wrapped around the (goddesses or) female spirits that kept the cycles of life in balance." This is the same worldview referred to by Stone (1976) wherein "people revered their supreme creator as female" in ancient times.

The original Nehanda was Nyamhita Nyakasikana, the daughter of the first Munhumutapa Mutota. Mutota was the founder of the Mutapa state. He had a son called Matope who later became the second Munhumutapa.

Matope was Nyamhita's younger half-brother, and to increase the power of Matope, Mutota ordered his son to sleep with his older half-sister, Nyamhita, who became widely known as *Nehanda*. This incest ritual was believed to have resulted in the increase of Matope's rule and empire. Matope handed over a part of his empire to Nehanda who became so powerful and well-known that her spirit lived on in the human bodies of various spirit mediums. During periods of possession by the spirit, spirit mediums were believed to be speaking with the voice and personality of the original Nehanda and not with their own (Beach, 1998).

One of the most memorable and inspirational mediums that claimed Nyamhita Nehanda's spirit was Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana, born in the second half of the nineteenth century. Being the late Nehanda's medium, she was the centre of communication between the living Shona societies and the ancestral spirits. She is seen as a symbol of resistance for her work and legacy in various liberation movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The significant career and revolutionary legacy of Zimbabwe's Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana are exemplified through her resistance efforts towards the colonist establishment in the late nineteenth century, her inspiration in the nationalist struggle for liberation in the 1970s and 1980s, and the current public monuments used to commemorate her revolutionary spirit.

Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana is recognised as one of the greatest military leaders and freedom fighters of the 1880s and 1890s due to her resistance to colonialism in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). As medium of the spirit Nehanda, Nyakasikana made oracular pronouncements and performed traditional ceremonies that were thought to ensure rain and good crops. She held great authority even before the 1896–97 rebellion. She was a powerful woman and staunchly committed to upholding traditional Shona culture.

Nehanda was instrumental in organising the nationwide participation in the First Chimurenga of 1896–97. During the arrival of the first European settlers, Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana occupied an important and influential position in the religious hierarchy in Mashonaland, where she is the only recorded woman known to have held such a significant position during the nineteenth century (Mutunhu, 1977). Nehanda opposed the oppressive British colonial rule from the start and believed Whites were evil, inhuman, and destructive. She also stated that *Mwari* disapproved of the British presence and demanded they be removed. According to Mutunhu (1977, p. 63), "she viewed the White men, as

filled with hate and fear, kill her people as if they were game or vermin and asked the spirits of the ancestors again and again why they had brought this evil." As more British settlers entered the country, Nehanda became highly concerned and worried about her people's social, political, and economic future. She witnessed her people being forcibly removed from their ancestral homes, subjected to racial and political oppression, economic exploitation, dehumanising forced labour and debilitating physical torture by the settlers.

Before the outbreak of the First Chimurenga, Nehanda devoted much of her time to training the men and women who volunteered to fight under her leadership. In 1896, when Nehanda received her orders from Mkwati, her soldiers were ready to fight the forces of colonialism and economic exploitation. Before the war fully broke out in Mashonaland, Nehanda established her military headquarters in the Husaka Mountain's network of caves. Nehanda gave orders to her soldiers to attack and kill White settlers in different military codes. Throughout the fight, the masses, chiefs, and headmen brought their concerns to Nehanda, where she then reported them to Sekuru Kaguvi at Mashayamombe. After these messages were exchanged, Nehanda and other leaders decided to mobilise the masses of their followers for the war against the European settlers and the oppressive Company administration. A series of meetings took place, where they discussed the final tactics of rebellion. Finally, in March 1896, Mkwati ordered the military forces to launch the national liberation war.

Nehanda's primary targets were White settlers; their farms, mines, and trading posts, policemen, and Africans who cooperated with the colonists. From June to August of 1897, the war raged throughout Mashonaland. Nehanda was a dedicated and disciplined commander who accompanied her highly motivated soldiers to the battlefield. Nehanda performed several significant acts in her resistance, such as providing the whereabouts of White settlers and keeping the morale of the fighting forces through spiritual fortitude. At first the Shona and Ndebele experienced victories on the battlefield, but after running out of supplies, they were eventually defeated. Nehanda Charwe allowed herself to be taken into captivity to avoid further African bloodshed and deaths. Her trial opened in March 1898, and she was found guilty of having killed the Native Commissioner Henry Hawkins Pollard who had become notorious for his cruelty. Consequently, she was hanged in March 1898 (Martin & Johhnson, 1981). Much mythology grew up around the difficulty involved in killing her (Keller, 2005). Before she was hanged, Nehanda Charwe announced to the British

that her body would rise again to lead the second, and this time victorious, struggle against them. Stories of her resistance efforts became legendary, and she was an inspiration to later nationalist movements in Zimbabwe.

Nehanda's heroism became a significant source of inspiration in the nationalist struggle for liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. She was a significant resistance leader in the struggle for national identity in Zimbabwe. Her role paved the way for women's involvement in the liberation movements, exemplified by women's involvement in the nationalist movement's protests and Second Chimurenga. In 1960, the women in the National Democratic Party led a protest in Salisbury, leading to the arrest of over two thousand women (Kuba, 2018). They organised this protest over the approval of a new constitution that exemplified colonial dominance, as Zimbabweans were granted only 15 out of 75 parliament seats (ibid.).

Nehanda is commemorated through public monuments, such as renaming the Lady Chancellor hospital to the Mbuya Nehanda Maternity hospital. In addition, the renaming of Victoria Street in the city of Harare to Mbuya Nehanda Street ultimately shows appreciation for her revolutionary and freedom fighter spirit. One of the most cherished monuments of Nehanda is the ten-foot-tall statue of her image erected in Harare. The prophecy of Nehanda's bones rising is not only a metaphor for events related to the war of liberation from the colonial yoke. It also represents the creative force of a great matriarch who continually rebirths herself through her descendants in times of need. It is a foremother's fierce maternal instinct regenerated for the liberation of successive generations of her offspring. It is the undying spirit of motherhood at its most emancipatory. There is nothing greater than a mother's love. The bones of Nehanda will continue rising and reviving until all her children are completely free.

'Mantsopa-the Prophetess

Little is known about the early life of 'Mantsopa especially in the present-day Lesotho leading to some scholars arguing that her existence is not well-known before 1851 when she began her prognostications (Ngobese, 2018). Written documents provide different accounts of her early life, presenting different version of where she was born and grew up (Goitsemodimo, 2019; Ngobese, 2018). While some accounts proclaim that 'Mantsopa was born around 1795 at Mekoatleng in the present-day Clocolan District (Ngobese, 2018), others agreeing on the date of birth allude that she was

born at the place called Likotsi in the village of Ramakhetheng, few kilometres south west of Maseru (Goitsemodimo, 2019).

'Mantsopa experienced hard life from the young age emanating from natural and man-made challenges. At the young age she and her community suffered from a great famine resulting from the tribal wars (Goitsemodimo, 2019). She was later taken captive by the Mankoane, who were in pursuit of Pakalitha and his Mahlubi people. The famine continued, leading her people and other tribes to turn to cannibalism. It was at this time that her father was eaten by people belonging to the Crocodile clan. Shortly after marriage, her husband, Lekote died, leaving her to be inherited as a wife by her husband's elder brother, Selatile. 'Mantsopa's father-in-law, Makhetha was reported murdered by the younger brother of Moshoeshoe resulting to 'Mantsopa's husband Selatile being compensated with prime land in what is today Modderpoort which explains how 'Mantsopa ended up living at Modderpoort. However, there are different versions of stories explaining how she came to stay in Modderpoort. One version of the story relates to 'Mantsopa's prognostication stating that she worked for Moshoeshoe I for years, successfully making many predictions that include but not limited to the wars that Moshoeshoe won. Some stories say that Moshoeshoe ignored some warning from 'Mantsopa leading to a prolonged drought in which thousands of Basotho died while others moved into the Free State in search for food (Ngobese, 2018). It is reported that suddenly King Letsie, the son of Moshoeshoe divested 'Mantsopa's riches for failure to make rain. Moshoeshoe himself condemned her accusing her of being charlatan and she was driven into exile by Letsie (Ngobese, 2018).

There are other explanations of how 'Mantsopa ended in the present-day Modderpoort. It is stated that she failed to predict the war, resulting in expulsion by Moshoeshoe or his sons. Still there is another version of the story saying that 'Mantsopa was becoming famous due to her prognostication hence Moshoeshoe feared her popularity culminating to her banishment. When the boundaries were set for Lesotho around 1868, the present boundaries were fixed with some Basotho including 'Mantsopa on the other side of the border. 'Mantsopa and fellow Basotho residents were constantly threatened with expulsion. Studies further show that there was a collusion between 'Mantsopa's spiritual and prophetic powers with Christianity accusing her of witchcraft. Nonetheless, 'Mantsopa ignored these Christianity insults and continued with her spiritual work. Even

though she was later converted into Christianity, she continued with her traditional practices.

Much has been documented about 'Mantsopa's legacy concerning the present-day Modderpoort with little or no attention to what she left behind for the village of Ramakhetheng or Likotsi and Lesotho in general. For South Africa and to some extent for Lesotho, the cave that was once occupied by 'Mantsopa, has connected pilgrims from all over the place believing they talk directly to their ancestors as the caves are considered to have religious significance for indigenous religious persuasion, indigenous knowledge systems and traditional healers in relation to veneration and reverence of ancestors (Ngobese, 2018). 'Mantsopa has left a sense of hope and optimism among the pilgrims and ordinary people who visited the place believing that the stone and the soil on which she slept, her sacred power is transmitted to the pilgrims. The pilgrims establish a direct link with 'Mantsopa using the ash from the ash heap to draw a cross on their foreheads, which is also common practice with Christians. The South African government has managed to name the Municipality including the Ladybrand area after 'Mantsopa to acknowledge her fame and the role she traditionally played. The name of the municipality attracts tourists to the area.

Recently, some evidence and reference to 'Mantsopa is emerging in Lesotho in which some institutions name themselves after 'Mantsopa, like Rotary club 'Mantsopa and 'Mantsopa communications. Much is not known concerning the naming of these institutions, whether there is connection with 'Mantsopa's fame but since 'Mantsopa is a big name in Sesotho history, most people use it for that reason. It has been found that there are some groups of people who have protected the springs claimed to have been used by 'Mantsopa near her village at Ha Makhetheng, Likotsi. People of different religious inclinations, traditionalists, and modern Christian affiliations come to the place annually to pray (Mrs Mapesela).

An interview with a family member revealed that they know about their great ancestor but much has not been done to document her story. They explain that they know they were related to such a big person and felt that much should be done to keep her legacy. "People have come here like you asking about her and promise to come and do something. We would feel very happy if the name of our ancestor could make a mark in books," said one relative. The youth in the village were excited about the plans to revive the history of 'Mantsopa in the village hoping it would create jobs for young people saying "At Ladybrand and Modderpoort tourists visit

those places and bring employment opportunities using the name of our mother. We wish the Ministry of Tourism will do something about this place. Already there are individuals and groups of different religions that come annually to pray at her water hole. This could be used to promote her name and improve the living condition of Basotho."

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed African matrilineal societies and women warriors and leadership in the precolonial Southern African history, the history which has been pushed into the fringes since the intrusion of Western civilisation into African affairs. As leaders and priestesses, women have occupied key roles in the developments that have shaped the course of African history. Several legendary women helped transform their societies. The chapter argued that before colonialism in Africa, there was no cultural discrimination against women by men. It also showed that in precolonial Africa women were not left out in governance as exemplified in the sample matriarchal warriors, queens and leaders (Nzinga, Nehanda and 'Mantsopa) discussed in this chapter to demonstrate women urgency and leadership in precolonial African societies. These examples illustrate that African women exercised their authority, often in the distinctly feminine styles of their times, in a manner that spanned spiritual, political, and military realms; and that has served to inspire feminist ideas not only in the sub-continent, but all over the world.

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CHAPTER 4

Are We Not Rightful Citizens Also? Women in Oral Folklore as a Mobilising Force for Contemporary Gender Struggles in Southern Africa

Enna Sukutai Gudhlanga
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4.1 Introduction

This chapter has been prompted by largely two issues, the tragic near extinction of folklore that address Africa's traditional past in general and women's issues in particular. While folklore constitutes numerous genres, the main focus of this chapter is on female heroic legends drawn from precolonial Africa. We argue that while there have been debates regarding the welfare of women from Africa, with most arguing and casting gender relations in negative light, the reverse was true on African soil as shown in most ethnic groups. While prominent positions with regards to socio-political and religious spheres were said to be reserved for men, folklore

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has made surprising revelations demonstrating female key roles even in the military. This chapter thus deconstructs myths drawn from Western lenses by focusing on achievements by women particularly in an era untouched by Western incursion- the precolonial period. It is for this reason that the Postcolonial theory is used and triangulated by the Africana Womanist theory. This chapter is based on accounts that have largely been drawn from online historical accounts as well as original oral stories. Legendary figures have been conveniently selected from accounts drawn from the Southern African region with special focus on areas to do with politics, the military, African traditional religion. The study has also shown that heroic women were not necessarily leaders in their own right but also played the roles of advisors to rulership and thus were indirectly influential to matters of governance and the throne as shall be demonstrated. It is critical to recognise indigenous heroines who have the potential of becoming models in shaping indigenous populations in contemporary society.

4.2 Background

Oral folklore has a rich and complex system which includes riddles, folktales, legends, proverbs, praise songs, lullabies and poetry among others. These have been passed down from generation to generation. With the existence of the written word, most of these have now been transcribed into the written form (hence the oral literature for reconstructed originally oral stories) while others have been captured in various media forms (audio and visual forms). Folklore in an African setting provides a rich source of cultural history and socialisation, transmitting and reinforcing messages associated with cultural values (Weinger et al., 2006). Thus, oral literature according to Senkoro (2005, p. 1) "enables us to observe and behold, as though through telescopic eyes, such people's patterns of beliefs of their customs." In this way "a people's philosophy is revealed by way of their folkloric wisdom. The eyes of folklore characters make one discern how people react to social pressures in their environment" (Senkoro, 2005, p. 1). It is from folklore that the experiences of women in Africa are visible. Gender roles therefore reflected in this folklore enables one to bring to the fore the position of women in traditional African societies. Writing about griotesses in West Africa, Hale (1994, p. 76) says, "judging from the limited information available [about women], one might assume that they are shadowy figures who stand at the margin of the oral narrative traditions recounted by their male counterparts, published in European

languages, and read by students around the world." In line with this, it is indisputable that a substantial number of folk stories of women remain undocumented owing to patriarchy and misogynistic tendencies in contemporary society. Yet the whole Southern African region is inundated with heroic stories of women, albeit many of them not properly documented. As a result, what we get are stories transcribed, retold in fictional form by mainly men as well as historical documents and critical works. This however does not subvert the role played by women as heroic figures capable of influential positions in African historiography. This chapter is qualitative in approach and uses desktop analysis based on oral traditions captured in historical works, narratives as well as creative works. It seeks to demonstrate that despite women occupying seemingly second-class positions in society, they have attempted since time immemorial to leave footprints on society.

The foregoing argument is in line with gender issues being serious sites of contention in most cultures of the world. Every year, significant amount of resources are spent in trying to level the playing field and accord women the same status and respectable image as their male counterparts (Gudhlanga & Makaudze, 2012). Ogbomo and Ogbomo (1993) have admitted that women from the precolonial era are some of the most poorly researched on, with studies mainly focusing on the prominent ones. Also, African culture has been unfairly condemned as repressive to women. Most researchers on African culture have portrayed the oppression of women as originating in African patriarchy (Ogbomo, 2005; Moagi & Mtombeni, 2020). These researchers argue that traditional African women were second-class citizens with no rights to be heard in society. It is therefore necessary to re-read and demonstrate how women fared in traditional societies. The position and status of women can only be clearly brought out in experiences drawn from the African people's folk literature. Ogbomo (2005, p. 49) says, "today the marginalised status of women gives the impression that African women have always been oppressed by their male counterparts." Yet despite efforts to provide this false narrative about women, tracing women's activities through oral folklore provides a better picture of what these women stood for. They were not confined to the background or largely to the domestic realm as many would tend to believe (Gudhlanga, 2011). A look at these women in prominent positions is testimony enough to show what they were made of. Moagi and Mtombeni (2020, p. 1) summarise this when they say this of women:

> *They were very active in the public domain; in politics as Princesses, Queen mothers, and regents; and in religion as prophets, diviners, and rainmakers. Gender division of labor was not rigid in precolonial Southern Africa as women could crossover to male type duties and sometimes, the sexes complemented each other. The social, economic, and political domains were therefore not exclusively for men as the gender oppression schools of historical analysis would like us to believe; they were for both sexes. In short, women in pre-colonial Southern Africa were independent; they controlled their bodies, owned their labor, and determined their destinies.*
>
> *Gudhlanga (2013) argues that this amply demonstrates that women in precolonial Africa were not regarded as second-class citizens for they positively and actively participated in the development of their nations. Neither were they controlled or heavily subjugated by men as the colonial narrative would like us to believe. African women lost these rights due to colonialism and codified customary law which had to take Victorian values and entrenched them on African culture and seriously confined women to the domestic space. The colonisers regarded precolonial African women as too independent to be left like that and therefore they saw the need to impose Victorian values among the colonised and deeply clipped the wings of precolonial African women.* (Gudhlanga, 2013)

Ogbomo (2005) concurs and states that oral folklore was testimony from precolonial African societies that emphasises the significant roles women played. Gouri (2019) also demonstrates how British colonialism and religious interventions have erased the history of women in Zambia. This chapter thus focuses on oral legendary heroines in largely precolonial Africa and aims at retrieving narratives that capture the significant positions that women occupied in Southern Africa.

Literary, historical and folk narratives are produced by the environment from which they emerge; hence male-female relations in African societies are embedded in oral traditions which are an embodiment of the philosophy of life as lived and celebrated in these societies. It is necessary for scholars of gender to begin to engage folklore with a view of deciphering women's voices, roles and positions in society. To clearly appreciate the position of women in African culture, it is imperative to see how men and women relate in folklore. It is important to decipher the male-female relations in oral literature because as alluded to earlier on "literary expression, in whatever form in which it exists, draws its materials from the experiences of its creators, giving us what Boas termed an 'autobiography of a tribe" (Olarinmoye, 2013, p. 138). This chapter dwells on myths and legends that have been passed down from generation to generation.

However, some scholars have critiqued the authenticity of oral traditions, particularly myth as "a word … [with] the overtones of untruth" as genuine sources of history owing to the exaggeration that is attributed to the genre and heroic figures (Piers, 2009, p.165). Piers cites the epic of Sundiata as an example. However, while avoiding the use of the word 'myth,' Piers admits that oral traditions "conflate what is literally true with what is symbolically and ethically, but not necessarily true" (p. 165). It is thus inevitable to conclude that oral traditions are gleaned from "shared corpus of the community's collective memory and hence provide a basis for believing the life and activities of precolonial women of repute" (Piers, 2009, p.167). In this chapter we therefore refer mainly to legendary stories of female heroines, queens and princesses of Southern Africa whose stories have left an indelible mark in history.

Further north in Africa before Islam, there are legends of famous queens such as Nerfetiti and Hatshopsut who held very high positions and ruled Egypt (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 14). Dodo (2013) cites powerful legendary queens like Amina who is believed to have been a strong fighter who successfully fought her neighbours and managed to build cities, received taxes from other chiefs and introduced cola nut in Niger. In this chapter we explore the stories of legendary women from Southern Africa.

This chapter is shaped by Cleonora Hudson Weems's Africana Womanism (1997) in a bid to demonstrate the harmonious and peaceful coexistence between men and women as partners even in positions of power and shared responsibility. It is also informed by the postcolonial literary theory which deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. Postcolonialism may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonising countries that take colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. Thus, postcolonialism also helps to bring to the fore how formerly colonised people of Southern Africa are now writing back to the empire by correcting the narrative of precolonial African women in Southern Africa. Oral traditions that are utilised in this chapter have been drawn from mainly online sources and critical works while a few such as the Nehoreka/ Makate epic were also drawn from both interviews with elders from Mutoko area. Another sample was also drawn from the fictionalised originally oral narratives such as *Chaminuka* by Solomon Mutswairo as well as *Nehanda* by Yvonne Vera. While some of these epics were retold by men, the role of women cannot be ignored. The Nehoreka and Chaminuka epics have been known to have enshrined the key roles played by women in the rulership of their men.

Owing to lack of recorded history or limited transcribed oral epics, quite a number of the female activities are drawn from the period just before colonialism hence may straddle between the periods precolonial and soon after colonialism.

4.3 Women as Key Players in Southern African Politics and Rulership

Legendary figures and their contributions to their societies provide a mirror into what traditional society represented. A legend is a genre of folklore which chronicles the achievements of historical figures of respective traditions. Southern Africa constitutes a rich repertoire of legends which chronicle the deeds of heroes and heroines in their societies and how they were regarded as formidable socio-political forces. It has been observed that ascendancy to power for most of these precolonial women was fraught with challenges from within their respective ethnic groups, for example Queen Nzinga of the Ndongo and Matamba ethnic groups (now present-day Angola) who seized her title with great opposition from the internal political factions in the kingdom (Lamba, 2023). She became the first woman to accede to the Ndongo kingdom (Rubinkowska-Aniol & Pietek, 2018). In a similar case Swazi Queen Labotsibeni faced opposition before eventually ascending to the throne (The Journalist, n.d.). What is interesting is the way these women stood their ground in the face of opposition and stiff competition from contestants to their respective thrones. Others simply took over from the bloodline of their predecessors. As political leaders they have left their mark hence the oral traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Chief among the Shona tradition is the legend of the heroine the original Nehanda who is believed to have been the daughter of Nyatsimba Mutota who was given a district of herself to rule in the 1500s. She has been described as a brilliant ruler by her people (Musiyiwa, 2008). There is also another legend of another Nehanda who emerged in the 1880s whose personal name was Charwe who lived in Mazowe Valley. Most references however have pointed to the Charwe of the first Chimurenga (also known as Nyakasikana) who, like a few predecessors after the original Nehanda, were spirit mediums, popularly known as Mbuya Nehanda. Nehanda was an influential and respected political leader who presided over war booty when her people defeated their erstwhile enemies for

distribution (Gudhlanga, 2013). She was also in charge of ammunition to the extent that even white settlers acknowledged her powerful status. The Chief Native Commissioner wrote concerning her, "Among other things obtained from Nehanda's kraal have been numerous rifles and 140 pounds in gold. I know that she still has concealed some 700 pounds" (Ranger, 1967, p. 210). Possession of ammunition and gold amply demonstrates her power and influence as a leader. She was later arrested by the settlers for her key role in resistance politics and sentenced to death by hanging in April 1898.

Apart from Nehanda, the Shona also have among their oral traditions the legend of Modjadji who lived in the Monomutapa kingdom around 1400 at the peak of its first phase of civilisation which built the Great Zimbabwe monuments. The Monomutapa kingdom produced one of the respected female leaders in Southern Africa, Modjadji, The Rain Queen (Makwenda, 2009; Gudhlanga, 2011, 2013). In c1800 Modjadji is believed to have left Great Zimbabwe under controversial and mysterious circumstances and headed southwards to present-day South Africa. There are a lot of stories surrounding Modjadji's departure from Great Zimbabwe (Gudhlanga, 2011). Some historians believe the story which states that she left because she fought with her brothers, as her father wanted her to take up the crown and to prove that she was chosen to rule; she decided to demonstrate by starting her own Queendom. She founded a people known as the Balobedi who have been ruled by matrilineal line of queens (Makwenda, 2009). The last Queen Modjadji died in 2005 and has not yet been replaced. In a similar way, Southern African legends are awash with powerful women like Modjadji who founded their own queendoms. From the South African side, the Modjadji lineage is known for doubling as famous rainmakers and rulers. This amply demonstrates that women in African traditional society were not passive recipients of development but directed and controlled activities in the public sphere as well as being actively involved in the power dynamics of their people. Also, among the Manyika, female leaders were sometimes appointed over some territories (Cheater, 1986). Bazley (1940) also notes the existence of headwomen among the Jindwi and Bocha in eastern Mashonaland. Being accorded the chance to lead is clear evidence of women's capabilities and that they were not marginalised but worked together with men for the betterment of the whole society. Folklore thus portrays women as powerful historical figures, not second-class citizens as Eurocentric scholars would like many to believe (Gudhlanga, 2010, 2013).

Among the Ndebele there is also the legend of Lozikeyi Dlodlo who was Lobengula's wife. Lobengula was the second and last official king of the Ndebeles of Zimbabwe. In 1893 Lobengula disappeared and was never found when the Ndebele kingdom under his leadership was attacked and overpowered by Cecil John Rhodes's soldiers. He is believed to have died there and with no known grave up to this day (Makwenda, 2009 cited in Gudhlanga, 2011). It was during this time that Lobengula's wife took over the reins of power and led the Ndebele nation. She is said to have been one of the best political strategists in the history of Zimbabwean politics. Makwenda (2009) first learnt of Lozikeyi at Oxford in London which demonstrates that the history and achievements of precolonial African women is not given prominence. The city of Bulawayo honoured Lozikeyi by naming a school in her honour, Lozikeyi Primary School in Nguboyenja, Mzilikazi high density suburb. Lozikeyi was known for her outspokenness and for her defiance of the white settlers in what would later become Rhodesia.

Wielding the same kind of power, Queen Labotsibeni Gwamile Mdluli, also known as Queen Regent Labotsibeni, was a prominent Swazi queen and regent who played a significant role in the history and governance of Eswatini whose welfare of the people she presided over (Encyclopaedia.com). According to Marwick (1940), in Swazi society, 'the king invariably consults his mother before taking action in any important national matter.' The king is liable to admonition and fine if he fails to respect and persistently defies the authority of his mother who is considered the mother of the nation (Ibid.). Another queen worth mentioning is Mwenya Mukulu of Zambia, who was queen of the Northern Province in the seventeenth century (Gouri, 2019). Unfortunately records of Mwenya Mukulu's achievements are lost to humanity save for the fact that she was one of the strongest female leaders to emerge from Zambia (Gouri, 2019). Among the Xhosa people of South Africa there was Unongqauze, who was an important prophetess and leader in the nineteenth century. She warned the Xhosa people of the hardships that would follow under colonial rule (Gudhlanga, 2013). These accounts go on to show that Southern African legends constitute powerful female leaders who participated in the public sphere in politics as exemplified in the various highlighted ethnic groups.

4.4 Women as Military Strategists and Tacticians

Women in Southern Africa have also been known as pillars of colonial resistance, at the centre of resistance and protest politics. Mbuya Nehanda, as mentioned earlier, was famous for this. She was a spirit medium and legendary national heroine in Zimbabwe. She led the resistance against colonial rule and was eventually captured and executed by the British in 1898 (Gudhlanga, 2013; Ranger, 1967). She mobilised and sustained the uprising and was responsible for the death of Henry Pollard, the Native Commissioner of Mazowe area at the outbreak of the uprising (Ranger, 1967, p. 209, Gudhlanga, 2010, 2013). She inspired and mobilised the Shona people to successfully rebel against the oppressive colonial regime, and her leadership was instrumental in the early stages of the uprising. Even upon death by hanging, Nehanda vowed to continue fighting as a spirit through the famous words, *Mapfupa angu achamuka* ("My bones shall rise again") (Sabao, 2019, p. 70) which were a source of inspiration in the second Chimurenga that ushered in Zimbabwe's independence as well as other resistance narratives.

Schmidt (1992) also observed in her research among the Shawasha and Chihota people (Shona ethnic groups) that there are legends of women with skills such as hunting and fighting, talents normally attributed to men. Among the Shawasha there was one daughter of the Shawasha who stayed with weapons and whenever there was a war even if she was cooking, she would leave everything to get her spear and axe and lead the army to war (Schmidt, 1992). Among the Chihota people elephant hunting was led by women who were renowned elephant hunters. Unfortunately, the roles of women in "male domains" diminished with the onslaught of colonialism (Ranger, 1981; Murphree, 1969). Thus, the foregoing narratives are a clear demonstration of women's positions in Shona precolonial society which cut across all domains of work that were later prescribed as male during colonial time and beyond. Oral tradition presents Nehanda as a gallant, defiant and brave fighter who played a significant role in the history of the liberation of Zimbabwe. But apart from her, Lozikeyi, Lobengula's wife also excelled as a military strategist and tactician. Clarke pursuing some studies on Lozikeyi wrote.

> *During the 1896 revolt she made sure the military was well equipped. While she was organising the attack on the white soldiers with her military, everything was kept secret. There was no leak whatsoever. This meant that when they*

> *attacked the whites they were taken completely by surprise. The 1896 Revolt was militarily far more serious than the 1893 War and would have defeated the British South Africa Company forces had imperial troops not intervened. In the war of the 1970s, when the time was ripe and military skills honed, she inspired her people to lay down the pen and pick up the guns again.* (Clarke, 2006 cited in Makwenda, 2009, p. 4)

This amply demonstrates that Queen Lozikeyi was a military strategist who fiercely fought the colonial invaders. Just like Mbuya Nehanda, she is an icon of the Zimbabwean people. The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) soldiers invoked her spirit for guidance during the liberation struggle (Gudhlanga, 2011). Oral tradition also has it that there were regiments of women chiefs among the Manyika who led female warriors in wars against their rivals (Schmidt, 1992). History also states that some of the best combat regiments during the Monomutapa period were comprised of only women, mainly young and unmarried (Kriger, 1992, p. 92).

In Namibia, Mbita was a Herero warrior queen who lived in the late nineteenth century. She led her people in a series of battles against German colonial forces and is remembered for her bravery and military tactics. In the eighteenth century she led her people in battles against British slave traders. There are records of Herero women fighting German soldiers as late as 1919 (Tsepo, 2018). Among the people of Lesotho is Queen Manthatisi. She was a legendary warrior queen who led the Batlokwa people in battles against the British colonial forces in the early nineteenth century. She is remembered for her bravery, tactical skills, and military leadership, as well as her commitment to protecting her people and their land. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks, Queen Manthatisi was able to unite various clans and ethnic groups to form a formidable army, and her legacy continues to inspire generations of South Africans and the Sothos today. Among the Zulu people of South Africa was uNandi who was the warrior mother of Shaka Zulu. She battled slave traders and trained her son to be a warrior. When he became King he established an all-female regiment which often fought in the front lines of his army.

In terms of military power in precolonial Southern Africa, that Zulu nation is probably the most famous. Shamase (2014) traces the pivotal role of women in the Zulu monarchy to the chieftaincy of Jam (1771) whose three daughters, Mkabayi, Mawa and Mmama headed military harems choosing to forego marriage in order to consolidate their position.

Another of the most powerful women to emerge from this ethnic group, as already stated, is that of Nandi, Shaka's mother, whose role is usually dwarfed by that of her son. Shamase (2014) goes on to state that Nandi played a pivotal role in the life and rulership of Shaka mainly because both mother and son jointly suffered victimhood and humiliation of Shaka having been born out of wedlock. It is also possible that what is perceived as the cruelty with which Shaka and Nandi were well known for could have been their survival skills of living with the humiliation and bullying that accompanied the circumstances around Shaka's conception and birth. It is, however, undeniable that from oral traditions, particularly the Zulu praise poetry (*izibongo*), Nandi was a force to reckon with, whose voice alone carried commanding authority. She hence was critical in the establishment of Shaka's military stronghold and was in charge of all female regiments (making sure they were not pregnant). She presided over other affairs when Shaka was away on war campaigns (Shamase, 2014) and Tsepo (2018) refers to her as Shaka's pillar of strength.

Still in South Africa, the Nguni people also have a legend of a female leader and warrior, Nyamazana, who actually drove Changamire Chirisamhuru out of his capital and possibly killed him (Bhebhe, 2004; Gudhlanga, 2013; Omer-Cooper, 1996). Chirisamhuru was the last king of the powerful Rozvi Empire but he gave in and fled from Nyamazana a female warrior who was even more powerful than him (Gudhlanga, 2011, 2013).

Perhaps the most documented of all the queens in terms of her military prowess is Queen Nzinga who is remembered for her military prowess and resistance against Portuguese colonial expansion. She made appearances wearing male attire and surrounded herself with men dressed as women. Using such means, she ritually presented herself as a man. Similarly, during court ceremonies she performed war dances, in this way showing that she was a ruler who personally participated in battles, and other military operations, showing herself to not only have leadership skills but also to be physically fit (Rubinkowska-Aniol & Pietek, 2018, p. 56). Nzinga is well known for having resisted and defeated the Portuguese traders hence underlining herself as a formidable military leader, forging alliances with neighbouring kingdoms and leading her troops in battles against Portuguese forces. Nzinga was pivotal in peace negotiations with the Portuguese including getting baptised in order to get Portuguese support (Rubinkowska-Aniol & Pietek, 2018). When she died it is said Nzinga was buried with her bow over her shoulder and arrows in her hand and her

position taken over by her sister Mukambu (Tsepo, 2018). Apart from their military prowess, these heroines were skilled negotiators who played important roles in maintaining peaceful relations between neighbouring communities. They were often coming in to resolve disputes and negotiate treaties.

4.5 Women in Contemporary Society

The concept of equality was not part of the traditional African women's perception of social relations. Hafkin and Bay (1976, p. 3) observe this and argue that precolonial African women did not see themselves as an under privileged class which had to fight with men in order to seek social equality because they enjoyed more freedom and power in a complementary gender system in which they participated as active agents of development. Even though women had power in the African traditional society, this is not supposed to be taken in a romantic sense since it was a patriarchal society; they had different ways of navigating role relationships in their communities (Gudhlanga, 2010, 2013). In many cultures women have been considered non-achievers, inferior to men and incapable of taking challenging responsibilities in their societies (Musiyiwa, 2008) but the portrayal of women in the Ndebele, Shona and other African legends demonstrated that women were not regarded as second-class citizens as colonialists would like us to believe. Seemingly, it is only in the oral literature of a people that one can decipher the position of women in those respective societies. There are also legends that portray male heroic figures like Chaminuka, Mapondera and Nehoreka. These male figures were both traditional and spiritual leaders, just like the women discussed above. Therefore, legends demonstrate that in precolonial Southern African societies, men and women worked side by side for the betterment of the community as demonstrated by the portrayal of women in the legends discussed above.

As a symbol of resistance: Mbuya Nehanda's bravery and spirit of resistance continue to inspire Zimbabweans today. She is celebrated as a national hero and a symbol of resistance against the oppressive colonial regime with her bravery and spirit of resistance inspiring young and old Zimbabweans today. Her resilience in the face of prosecution and persecution has inspired many even across the gender divide particularly inspired freedom fighters in the second Chimurenga, which finally ushered in independence (Gudhlanga, 2010). Solomon Mutswairo in his seminal novel

Feso captures an invocation of Nehanda, a poem that became influential in resistance politics. Through the legend of Nehanda Shona oral tradition presents women as active agents of development who participated alongside men in influencing the development of their communities. Nehanda is even celebrated in present-day Zimbabwe by having her image on the ZWL50 dollar bill as well as a statue erected in her honour in the city centre of Harare, along the intersection of very busy roads, Samora Machel Avenue and Julius Nyerere Way. There is also a street named after her in Harare and a Mbuya Nehanda Maternity Hospital at Parirenyatwa, the biggest referral hospital in Zimbabwe located in Harare. This demonstrates that even in present-day Zimbabwe her importance in the history of Zimbabwe is still recognised. The precolonial legendary female figures had power and were not passive recipients of any ideas that were developed in their societies for they themselves influenced development. Through the legend of Nehanda, Shona women had power and could actively participate in the public sphere; they were not confined to the domestic arena as what later happened after the introduction of colonialism and codified customary law which was heavily engraved with Victorian values and relegated women to the fringes of the society (Gudhlanga, 2010, 2013). Through the legends of Nehanda, Lozikheyi, Nzinga, Lobatsibeni, Modjadji and Manyika female warriors and chiefs, the girl-child is inspired by such women of good social standing who were powerful and participated in the day-to-day activities of their societies. Examples of legends cited above demonstrate that precolonial African women in general wielded more power than what was later acknowledged in customary law (Batezaat, 1988). Musiyiwa (2008) has highlighted the importance of female legendary figures even to children who find role models that straddle the gender lines drawn by society. Children at the same time grow up historically conscious and inspired to action without being bound by the fetters of gender.

The reign of Labotsibeni also left a legacy which remained an important foundation for Swazi political and economic developments throughout the twentieth century. Eswatini, even today, is a dual monarchy with the queen mother playing an indispensable role, 'when there is no King, the Indlovukazi is King' (Encyclopaedia.com). As the chief wife of Mbandzeni who ruled from1874 to 1889 and then as a Queen Mother during the reign of her son, Bhunu, 1894–1899, and finally as the Queen Regent from December 1899 to 1921, LaMdluli was the longest reigning monarch in the history of Eswatini. Moreover, the Swazi pride themselves

as a unique society in Southern Africa because they are the only ones where the king has a female co-ruler (Encyclopaedia.com). Honorific titles reflected her power and terms of endearment by her people: Indlovukazi (Lady Elephant) as well as Mother of the Country (Tsepo, 2018).

Queen Labotsibeni Gwamile Mdluli was a respected and influential leader who played a significant role in the history and governance of Eswatini. Her legacy continues to be celebrated today, and she is remembered as a powerful and visionary queen who worked tirelessly to improve the lives of her people. Queen Labotsibeni Gwamile (the indomitable one) Mdluli, also known as Queen Regent Labotsibeni or Queen Dzeliwe, was a prominent Swazi queen and regent who played a significant role in the history and governance of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). The International Year of Women in 1975, Swazi women recalled the statue of Labotsibeni by referring to her as "Mgwamie," an abbreviated form of her name which both commemorates her role in consolidating Swazi nationhood during turbulent times and personalises the affection felt for her as one of the greatest queen-mothers or regents in their country's history

Queen Labotsibeni (Eswatini) was also a strong advocate for women's rights and played a key role in promoting women's education and empowerment in Eswatini as well as the marginalised and mistreated. She was known to have been an astute entrepreneur, financier of the Abantu Batho New Chapter (The Journalist, n.d.) demonstrating that as an oralate stateswoman she understood the power of the printed word and ensured that Abantu-Batho staff members reported on key issues affecting governance (The Journalist, n.d.). This is evidence that women in general and women in Southern Africa in particular have always guaranteed society a future. As such, abuse of women was treated with contempt. Makaudze and Gudhlanga (2011, p. 308) argue that:

> *the continuous reference to women either as mothers, grandmothers, girls, aunts or wives shows that Shona society is quite aware of, and quite appreciative of the significance of women in society. The words "vekwedu" or "kekwedu" are not in any way discriminatory but associative. In traditional society, children, whether male or female are taught and made to love the existence, influence and indispensability of women thereby minimising chances of discriminatory behaviour leading to gender imbalances.*

Such powerful women should be taught in the current history and gender studies in schools to inspire both the girl and the girl child of our

present-day communities (Gudhlanga & Chirimuuta, 2016a, 2016b). Understanding the critical position that women had in Shona traditional society might help alleviate the conflicting gender debates when it comes to the position of women in present-day societies. Makaudze and Gudhlanga further argue that there are reasons as to why Shona society cultivates such a philosophy among its young citizens. It is because they want to stress the importance of women in their societies. Without women the institution of family would not succeed. Women are highly respected for their roles as mothers of the clan and society as a whole. Achebe (1958) in his seminal novel *Things Fall Apart* has underlined this role when he says, "mother is supreme." Elsewhere (West Africa) in such oral legends such as Sundiata, Sogolon and Sasouma Berette ensured that their sons ascend to the throne showing the power that women wielded. In a similar manner, Regent Mdluli ensured the security of the kingdom of Swaziland. These women today act as role models in contributing to traditional leadership in governance, despite having ushered in a democratic dispensation. Some African countries have demonstrated that the aspirations of traditional structures can be reconciled quite effectively with those of government. They could cooperate and work in collaboration with each other positively for common good (Ndlela et al., 2010).

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter has amply demonstrated that precolonial Africa was awash with powerful women who actively participated in the public sphere of their communities. These powerful women include; Nehanda among the Shona of Zimbabwe, Lozikeyi of the Ndebele (Zimbabwe), Queen Nzinga of Angola, Queen Lobatsibeni of Eswatini, Queen Modjadji of South Africa and Manyika female warriors (Zimbabwe) among others. Such powerful women should be taught in the current history and gender studies in schools to inspire both the girl and the boy child of our present-day communities. Understanding the critical position that women had in Southern African traditional society might help alleviate the conflicting gender debates when it comes to the position of women in present-day societies. Using traditional structures as models for modern society is more likely to provide solutions to modern day gender struggles which are often premised on societies that are alien to Africa. Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular is endowed with examples of legendary precolonial female figures who straddled all spheres of the public domain and

directed the governance of their societies. This, therefore present-day societies can greatly learn from this, and it would inform current gender debates in Africa.

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CHAPTER 5

An Exploration of Women Leadership in Pre-colonial Zambia: The Case of Mwenya Mukulu

Judith Lubasi Ilubala-Ziwa

5.1 Introduction

Recent efforts to document women's contribution towards political, economic, and religious development of Zambia are rather insufficient. Prominent writers (Dahlschen, 1970; Freeman, 1993; Siwila, 2017; Osei-Hwedie, 1998; Ziwa, 2022) have restricted their discussions to colonial and post-colonial eras, giving an impression that women were inactive prior to these periods. The opposite is, however, the truth in the sense that women in Zambia performed important leadership roles even in pre-colonial era. Available but scanty studies showed that in pre-colonial era, Zambia had more female than male chiefs (Sharma, 2019). According to Marwick (1965), Chewa women of Eastern Province of

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Zambia could sometimes work as *mfumu* (chiefs) on both acting and permanent basis.

The narrative took a different twist upon the arrival of colonial masters who side-lined women and appointed more men as chiefs due to preconceived Western gender stereotypes (Sharma 2019). Women who served as chiefs, were not given incentives in the form of gifts and tributes like their male counterparts (Milner-Thornton, 2020). Furthermore, missionary and colonial administration considered women as domestic workers caring for children and husbands, cooking, laundry, basket weaving and farming leaving economic and political matters to men. This is exemplified by Snelson's (1974) assertion that at Limulunga, Lewanika's summer capital, the first school in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) opened in March 1883 with an enrolment of three pupils, all boys. Attainment of education for girls was yet to be realised. As a result, though many African men suffered under colonialism, new opportunities eventually appeared for them while women's economic and political, and indeed, religious rights diminished.

This loss of political power was frequently associated with diminished access to land and labour power. For example, Mulenga and Krishna (2004) who looked at the contribution of Zambian and Indian women during the struggle for freedom in Northern Rhodesia reported that women took part in different economic activities such as working as marketers, potters, and cultivators among others. Marcia Wright (1983) documented how women in Mazabuka District, Southern Province, lost both economic and political power during the colonial period. Milner-Thornton (2007) further reported that due to gender stereotypes, some white men practically abused women sexually and left with them half caste children without providing them with reasonable support. Women who sought and took different roles such as working in urban areas were considered as immoral human beings and others were repatriated to their respective villages (Milner-Thornton, 2007). Similarly, in Western Kenya new property laws reduced women's rights to land (Parpart, 1986). Colonial authorities assisted male farmers while dismissing the efforts made by female farmers as mere subsistence food producers. Parpart (1986) stated that when colonial officials wanted to enhance African cash crop production, they offered male farmers technical training and assistance while ignoring women farmers. As such, male farmers were able to accumulate surplus than female farmers, and thus increasingly dominated the rural areas.

This snapshot gives a picture of turbulences women, especially those who took influential roles, had to traverse in the colonial era. Important to

note also is that the history and legacy of women who lived before this period cannot go without mention since they contributed to the development of Zambia. Early writers, predominately of European origin, propagated gender stereotypes against women. So they could not account for them in the history and development of the nation. As shown in the preceding paragraphs, the formal education introduced and trans-infused in the minds of Africans was equally obsessively biased against women. For example, in the early years of formal education in Zambia, the history textbooks largely contained male figures and omitted well-known and influential female figures such as Mwenya Mukulu the diplomat, Lueji wa Nkonde the politician, 'Litunga la Mboela' secretary to the state, Na Chituti the peace maker (The Alchemist, 2013). Arguably, this colonised view of men and women has to some extent contributed to African writers portraying bias when discussing women's contribution to development in Zambia.

Conversely, this chapter emerges to plot a different dimension as it singles out, among her contemporaries, Mwenya Mukulu, who against all odds (as Mukwita put it) showed leadership and contributed immensely to the existence of the Lungu speaking people in Zambia. In what follows, the chapter briefly narrates who Mwenya Mukulu was and her contribution to the people she served in their chiefdoms and Zambia at large. It does so by relying on what prevails, taking into consideration that available written literature might be contradictory to oral literature.

5.2 Mwenya Mukulu

Due to the period in which Mwenya Mukulu existed on the African and Zambian soil, it is worth stating from the onset that different accounts have been given regarding her life experiences in Zambia. For purposes of understanding and reliability, Gondwe's (2018) and Will's (1999) accounts are used. According to Gondwe (2018), Mwenya Mukulu, a seventeenth century diplomat was one of the four sisters and seven brothers, all children of Chief Tendwe Lesa of Congo's Buzabu area. Using her courage and charismatic skills, Mwenya Mukulu emerged to be a powerful leader of the Lungu of the Azamba, Aba Shimba or Azao clan (Commonly referred to as Anyama Lungu).

At the end of the seventeenth century, Mwenya Mukulu led the Anyama Lungu down the lake in canoes from the eastern side of Lake Tanganyika. The Anyama Lungu found other people already living in this area. These are the Lungu who came from the Eastern border of Zambia and Tanzania led by clan leaders. This group passed through the Mambwe land before

they finally settled at Isoko which later became the palace headquarters of the Lungu people. Gondwe (2018) further asserted that Mwenya Mukulu noted that some people were politically organised yet others were not. She proceeded to negotiate her leadership and organised them into formal governance structures and provinces. Without waging war or conflict, she brought the people together under her leadership and built her political power with the new communities.

Gondwe (2018) goes on to write that in order to ensure that effective administration prevailed, Mwenya Mukulu divided these areas among her three sisters: one sister, Kafise Lyense, went to rule over Malaila in present day Mbala, Chilomboshi was assigned to rule in Mutakuya in present day Mpulungu, and Mwenya Kalwa became the chieftainess of the Tabwa in present day Mporokoso. Mwenya, herself, settled in Mbete Kasakalabwe around Chamukoloshi along Lake Tanganyika shores, and later chose to settle at Mapembe near Isoka. In this way, Mwenya and her sisters lived and ruled the lands and became the founding Queen mothers of some of the Tabwa, Lungu, and Mambwe chieftaincies in present day Northern Province of Zambia (Sharma, 2019). Additionally, Gondwe (2018) asserted that Mwenya Mukulu went back to Congo after an encounter with her brother who came to look for her after her whereabouts in Congo could not be traced. Whilst in Congo, she started bearing children who later became chiefs in the Lungu kingdom. Up until 1968 the chiefs who ruled in the Lungu kingdom in Zambia were all coming from Congo (Gondwe, 2018).

Roy Willis, another researcher who mainly gathered information on Mwenya Mukulu and the Lungu people around 1990 through interaction with the elders of the Lungu Chiefdom, documented a slightly similar account to the forgoing. According to Willis (1999), Mwenya Mukulu and her sisters together with other relatives migrated from their parent's chiefdom in Congo due to population growth which brought about shortage of land for cultivation. Leading the group, Mwenya Mukulu first settled in Malungu area of South-East Congo before she proceeded eastwards. Of importance to mention in the findings of Willis, was the encounter of Mwenya Mukulu with Kapambwe and later Muzombwe of Mbete village. Willis indicated that Kapambwe was a spirit specialist or simply a chief traditional priest who upon meeting with Mwenya Mukulu married her niece, Mangala with her permission. Subsequently, Kapambwe became son-in-law and a social subordinate to Mwenya Mukulu. To some extent,

this strategic relationship gave aliens an upper hand of controlling indigenous settlers.

Willis's (1999) findings further indicated that upon meeting with Muzombwe, a headman of Mbete village, Mwenya Mukulu was given a chiefly stool to sit on while he sat on a log of a tree. The gesture signified his wilful concession of traditional authority. At the same time, there is an assumption that Muzombwe's action was a result of Mwenya Mukulu's physical presentation which frightened him. She always wore necklaces, with beads on her head and anklets called *nsambo*. Her heavy appearance terrified Muzombwe so much that he surrendered his official seat to her (Willis, 1999). Having settled in Mbete village around Lake Tanganyika, Mwenya Mukulu took charge of administrative control of the already settled population while Kapembwa, her son-in-law, became a priestly bearer of spiritual authority over the land and offered military protection from their royal patrons.

The above account might be in contradiction with other accounts in oral and written literature. However, the account acknowledges that Mwenya Mukulu originally came from Congo and had influence in the Chiefdoms of the Lungu of Northern Zambia.

5.3 Mwenya's Contribution

From the two accounts above, it is clear that Mwenya Mukulu played a role in building the identity of the people of Northern Zambia. The encounter of Mwenya Mukulu with Kapembwa followed by that with Muzombwe marks the genesis of the bi-traditional authority structure of the Lungu speaking people and their culture as it exists in modern times. Due to Mwenya's charismatic influence, currently, there is a complementary of priesthood and royalty, spiritual and secular authority in Lungu land, as is the case in other traditional authorities in Zambia.

Through her skills, Mwenya Mukulu was quick to notice that the people in the area lacked leadership and solidarity which could expose them to the risk of being attacked and captured into slavery by united tribes. As such, and notwithstanding her gender, she carefully delimited the larger Lungu land (Northern Province) into smaller governable portions. To ensure that similar beliefs, morals, and religious values prevailed among her people she used her inborn legitimacy and appointed her own sisters as chieftaincies in the territories she created. Important to mention is the fact that she did all she could without intimidation, harassment, conflict or

war over the people she found. Instead, she employed her tactful and well-discharged leadership skills and might have reasoned with the people the need for them to accept her as a leader and they accepted it as legitimate leadership. This is a good leadership style modern political leaders can learn from Mwenya Mukulu. One does not need to intimidate, corrupt or indeed wage war on others in order to succeed as a leader.

Furthermore, Mwenya's delimitation exercise led to the birth and existence of modern day Isoka, Mpulungu, Mporokoso, and Mbala districts of Northern and Muchinga provinces, making it easier for current government administrators to equitably deliver development to these marked areas. Most importantly, Mwenya Mukulu helped the people of Northern Province to be bonded together as northerners under shared values such as unity, care, generosity, and hard work (Taylor, 2006). As reported by Willis (1999), the Azao under the leadership of Mwenya Mukulu migrated along with skills such as basketry, weaving, canoe building, fishing nets, and iron smithing. Some of these skills are still used by the locals in the areas Mwenya had contact with.

As we conclude this section, it is worth noting that though Mwenya Mukulu found herself in a predicament, of having to migrate due to shortage of land for cultivation, she did not sit idle and succumb to the pressure but looked for opportunities which could help sustain her life and her relatives' lives. This is a good example to women in Zambia who might be facing trying moments in their lives. Instead of focusing on challenging situations, they should search for opportunities to enhance their livelihoods. Mwenya Mukulu was not only a role model to the women flock but also to youths in Zambia who are mainly unemployed. They should use God-given skills to work towards providing an enabling environment for sustainable personal, family and national development.

5.4 Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the topic at hand using decolonial theoretical perspective. 'Decolonial' is used as a term referring to collective efforts aimed at bringing the marginalised, especially in the colonial era, to the centre-stage of scholarly labour; to memorialise and elevate their perspectives, histories, and struggles, which would otherwise be lost in the throes of oppression (Gebriel, 2018). At issue is that knowledge is power, but knowledge on pre-colonial women's leadership skills is overshadowed by literature that is more inclined to patriarchy as snapshotted below.

While gender inequalities in Africa manifested through indigenous cultures during the pre-colonial period, European influence exacerbated it. European colonisation of the continent undermined sources of status and autonomy that women had and strengthened elements of indigenous male dominance or patriarchy. As debated by leading decolonial scholars (Anunobi, 2002; Jaiyeola & Aladegbola, 2020; Spencer-Wood, 2016), women in pre-colonial era held political positions such as chiefs, advisors, or rainmakers, which were part of their power sources. However, with the advent of colonialism in Africa, male-dominated government structures were introduced that did not recognise women's role in governance. Additionally, the colonial forms of religion, education, and economy which they introduced heightened patriarchy by undermining women's indigenous sources of power which isolated them from active participation in the socio-economic, political and religious activities of their societies. In Zambia, like elsewhere in Africa, colonial tendencies also manifested in academic papers, where writers wrote about man-centred history and development of the country without considering women's contributions.

A decoloniality framework addresses this narrative by examining the mind set and motive of the writers. The framework enables us to reflect on what kind of historical knowledge about women was considered 'legitimate' by writers, and to evaluate how this knowledge sustains or challenges an otherwise androcentric or masculinist history (Wills, 2016). In doing so, decolonial discourses help us counter the coloniality of power manifested through the insularity of the dominant patriarchal historical narratives entrenched in gender literature, which are remnants of colonial epistemologies and historiographical traditions (Wills, 2016). Coloniality of power refers to the legacies of European colonialism in knowledge, social forms, and institutions like universities and schools (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

In academia, coloniality of power is conveyed through unbalanced gender power relations in history literature. Therefore, it is high time that Zambian history shifted from the current forms of historical discourses advancing coloniality of power through dominant man-centred writing, and move towards decolonising knowledge by highlighting women's contribution in shaping the country's history.

5.5 Literature Review

Against the general assumption signalled by the silence of literature on matrilineal leadership, in the pre-colonial era, women took delicate leadership positions not only in Zambia but also in other African countries in pre-colonial era. Sweetman (1984) wrote about how Dona Beatrice of Kongo, a princess of Marinda Cult, demonstrated religious leadership leading to her death. She established her own version of Christianity. She led a rebellion that mobilised discontent against the pro-Portuguese Kongo leadership so effectively that the Kongo king had her and her infant son burned to death.

In pre-colonial Yorubaland, women strategically pushed for space of representation in the King's Council so much that leadership legalised dual-sex systems which gave women a formal role in the political process (Awe, 1977). The Iyalode had jurisdiction over all women and represented women's concerns on the king's council, an institution otherwise dominated by men. Additionally, Bukh (1979) wrote about how women influenced male councils in Ghana through systematic representation. The author shares an example of Ewe of Ghana, an elected Queen Mother who had a council of elderly women as advisers and a spokesperson to speak for her exactly as the male chief. Thus, although women could only speak to the council of male elders through the Queen Mother and the males kept decisions and initiatives on their hands, women did have a representative who could seek to influence male councils.

Nyamweru and Carrier (2011) talked about Mekatilili wa Menzi, a female liberation activist and peace maker of Kenya's Giriama community. In 1913, Mekatilili took a leading role in the Giriama apprising, an indigenous-led movement, which spearheaded resistance against British oppressive leadership reforms. As articulated by Brantley (1986), Mekatilili played a major part in a meeting held in Kayafungo, the ritual centre of the Giriama, in July and August 1913, where she led the discussions and complained first about labour demands and then about the jurisdiction of the traditional elders being undermined. She indicated that vital traditional customs were being spoiled and that wages which headmen received influenced the government to believe that they could demand cheap labour from the locals. In view of this, Mekatilili advised both men and women, especially the elders, not to be divided but united, not to receive bribes from Europeans and not to fear them. This meeting concluded with a

swearing with oaths that prevented all Giriama from co-operating with the colonial administration.

Notwithstanding her gender, Mekatilili showed leadership at the time when it was most needed by her community. Also, important to mention, is that men sandwiched in the tactics of colonial administrators who also took note of Mekatilili but underrated her due to preconceived gender bias. She stood her ground and resisted British demands and stringent conditions imposed on her society, as though she was headwoman. According to Brantley (1986), her legitimacy must have emerged entirely from her charisma. She was an effective and emotional public speaker, and as she began to publicise the injustices she felt, she found many Giriama who agreed with her. She was highly feared and also respected because of her strength of character and dedication (Ndua, 2000).

In Zimbabwe's Mashonaland, the name Nehanda is well remembered for her resistance against colonial rule and self-sacrifice in defending the social and economic welfare of indigenous people. As recorded by Collier (2022), Nehanda was a charismatic female religious and political leader (though highly dominated by men) who ruled Mashonaland from pre-to-colonial era. Unlike other religious leaders who supported oppressive European administration, Nehanda stood her grounds and strongly opposed foreign rulership to any length within her ability. As white settlers exponentially increased in Mashonaland, Nehanda got so concerned that in 1896 she organised and trained indigenous men and women to wage war against European masters in a war called Chimurenga (Mutunhu, 1976). During Chimurenga, Nehanda actively participated in addition to providing leadership. She was key in allocating the whereabouts of White settlers and keeping the morale of the fighting forces through spiritual fortitude (Mutunhu, 1976).

Though later captured and hanged to death by the British administration, Nehanda's role paved way for women's involvement in later liberation movements, exemplified by women's involvement in the nationalist movement's protests and second Chimurenga. For example, in 1960, the women in the National Democratic Party led a protest in Salisbury, leading to the arrest of over two thousand women. This account provides a wider base on which to argue and rule out the assumption that women had no influence in society in pre-colonial era.

Nzinga Mbandi of Angolan origin is another key female figure in African resistance to colonialism in addition to African's religious, political, and social transformation literature. As told by UNESCO (2014),

Nzinga was instrumental in thwarting Portuguese attempts to make Ndongo the largest slave trading site in Africa around the sixteenth century. Soon after taking power as queen of Ndongo kingdom in 1624 and later Matamba kingdom, she quickly distinguished herself as an outstanding strategist and skilful negotiator, who defended her country steadfastly until her death in 1663 at the age of 82. She vigorously opposed Portugal's colonial designs by building strategic alliances, maintaining a diplomatic correspondence and sometimes directing military operations in person.

With reference to her legacy in today's Angola, Nzinga is a cultural icon for various groups in Angola. Ambassadors, negotiators, strategists and compatriots consider Nzinga as a key historical figure essential to understanding the construction of Angolan identity. During the Angolan war of liberation (1961–1974), nationalists revived the memory of Nzinga and made her an icon of independence. In 1975, when the country's independence was proclaimed, her statue was erected in Luanda, the capital city, as a symbol of resistance and freedom (UNESCO, 2014). Nzinga's influence is not only remembered in Congo. In Brazil, she is well remembered for her contributions to that country's independence when she reigned as Queen of Ndongo and Matamba (Orquidea et al., 2019). Additionally, Nzinga Capoeira Angola Group Institute, a centre for education and social integration through *capoeira*, is inspired and named after her. The Institute's main purpose is to promote gender equality within this traditionally male-dominated institution.

In Zambia, women other than Mwenya Mukulu existed and equally played pivotal roles towards political and social stability of their respective communities. For example, Langworthy (1972), Mainga (1973) and Matakala (2020) document how Mbuyawamwabwa, a female figure, traversed through obstacles upon succeeding her mother Mwamba as she led her people from Luba-Lunda region in Congo to establish the Lozi Kingdom in present day Western province of Zambia. Mainga (1973) added that before the Kololo invasion of 1831–1832 there was a council of women in Lozi Kingdom, known as '*anatambunu*', which took part in serious decision making of the Lozi society. This trend has continued in current times since Nalolo chiefdom is led by a woman.

Accounts such as those aforementioned support views of Sharma, (2019) suggesting that Zambia had more women than men as traditional leaders in pre-colonial era.

Such works also expose modern day widely dominated patriarchal leadership as a social construct exacerbated by Christian missionaries and

colonial masters. Most importantly, this section vindicates the argument that in pre-colonial Africa, women took charge of high political and religious offices, either through election, heredity or charismatic tendencies. Women proved to be effective leaders and out powered men while some equalled them. For Mwenya Mukulu, her contribution was vindicated by the following findings.

5.6 Findings

Knowledge on Mwenya Mukulu

It is important to mention that the selected participants declined to give information beyond acknowledging that they knew who Mwenya Mukulu was. Three of the participants targeted to take part in the study were not willing to give any further information other than indicating that the Lungu people's genesis trickled down to Mwenya Mukulu as an ancestor.

According to minimal information gathered in an interview held with one of Mwenya Mukulu's great grandsons who sought anonymity, Mwenya Mukulu was a princess who originated from Buzabu in Zaire. She belonged to Mzimba clan. He narrated:

> *Mwenya Mukulu and her two sisters namely Namwema and Nyese (also called Kalwa) migrated in 16th century to Zambia in the Southern part of Lake Tanganyika due to wars, fighting, and hunger.*

According to the great grandson, Mwenya Mukulu was married to Chief Chivunamphando in the Southern sector of Lake Tanganyika. Her sister was married in Mporokoso to Mukupa Kaoma of the Tabwa speaking people; the other sister (Mwenya Nyese-Kalwa) got married in Nsama area. "According to what I know the three were not chiefs but rather married to chiefs," the grandson added. He also indicated that Mwenya Mukulu was married to the clan which followed patrilineal system while her other two sisters were married to clans which subscribed to matrilineality. The great grandson further disputed records which suggested that Mwenya Mukulu ruled three different kingdoms. He explained that since Mwenya Mukulu was married to a clan which subscribed to patrilineal system of kingship, her sons have since then been ascending to the throne as chiefs of Lungu land even in present day Zambia.

The Legacy of Mwenya Mukulu

With regard to the legacy left by Mwenya Mukulu, the great grandson indicated that Mwenya Mukulu was remembered by the Lungu people of Northern Zambia as Queen Mother who gave birth to the lineage of first chiefs of the Lungu. He elaborated:

> *In fact, along the system of succession an error was made where Mwenya Mukulu's grandsons were authorised to ascend to the throne while their late father's brothers were still alive and needed to be rightly sworn in as chiefs.*

He gave an example of the then chief of the Lungu chiefdom by the name of Kakungu Siame who came from Mambwe land. This was considered as a shift from the known lineage of Lungu chiefs.

5.7 Discussion

Regardless of scanty and mixed-up information, the chapter has established that Mwenya Mukulu was a courageous woman who played a critical role in traditional leadership in pre-colonial era. Using her inborn skills, she led her siblings from Congo to Zambia where she negotiated her leadership and became leader of the Lungu speaking people of the Northern Province of Zambia (Willis, 1999; Gondwe, 2018; Sharma, 2019).

The bold decision taken by Mwenya Mukulu to migrate brought about delimitation of northern Zambia into smaller and governable territories. For example, literature (Willis, 1999; Gondwe, 2018; Sharma, 2019) suggested that she appointed and sent her sister Kafise Lyense to rule over Malaila in present day Mbala, Chilomboshi to rule in Mutakuya in present day Mpulungu, Mwenya Kalwa became the chieftainess of the Tabwa in present day Mporokoso, while she settled in Mbete Kasakalabwe around Chamukoloshi along Lake Tanganyika shores, choosing to settle at Mapembe near Isoko. These findings were supported by the findings gathered from Mwenya's great grandson which showed that Mwenya and her sisters were migrants but they took up roles as wives of chiefs. This was a responsibility which required Mwenya to interact and mentor young women into various responsibilities. It is true that African marriage concerns not only the couple involved: it is primarily an alliance between two

kinship groups. So by marrying Chief Chivunamphando, Mwenya Mukulu contributed to the alliance between her people and the Lungu of Zambia.

It is also obvious that Mwenya Mukulu's migration triggered economic transformation in the Northern Province. As submitted by Ortega and Peri (2009), migration can bring about various gains to hosting societies such as innovation, productivity, and civilisation. This assertion was well testified in Mwenya Mukulu's migration case as Willis (1999) confirmed that the entourage from Congo came along with skills such as basketry, weaving, canoe building, fishing nets, and iron smith. Up until modern days, these skills have not only remained as an identity of the people of the northern region of Zambia but also indigenous residents economically (World Bank, 2013).

Notable during the course of working on this chapter, was the incongruence between existing oral records and literature available. In as much as all sides converge at admitting that a woman called Mwenya Mukulu existed and migrated from Congo to Zambia along with relatives, there is divergence on what happened upon this same woman reaching Zambia. According to literature, Mwenya ruled as chieftain of the Lungu people in Mbete area of Isoka district, she appointed her sisters as rulers in Mbala, Mporokonso and Mpulungu areas. However, oral history does not agree with this written account of Mwenya Mukulu's status in Zambia. She was married to a chief of a clan which followed patrilineal succession system; so her sons and grandsons were legitimate candidates to ascend to position of chief. This account is in harmony with the 1957 succession agreement of the Lungu Royal Establishment which states that sons of fathers from Mwenya Mukulu's womb shall succeed their fathers as chiefs (Simusokwe, 2018; Mbewe, 2020). Apparently, since 1968, the 1957 agreement has not been observed when appointing the Lungu senior chief (Gondwe, 2018). This resulted in succession wrangles in Lungu land from 1968 to the current times.

Above all, the findings have shown that a woman of courage existed and was believed to be the ancestor of Lungu speaking people of Isoka, Mbala, Mporokoso, and Mpulungu in the name of Mwenya Mukulu. This adds to the record of women leadership in pre-colonial era in Zambia. This is valuable information, especially since recent attempts to account for women leadership in Zambia have been restricted to colonial and post-colonial era. Therefore, this chapter has contributed to striking gender balance in the history of Zambia's development, thereby, vindicating existing gender biased, stereotyped, and patriarch dominated history

written by colonial masters. Parpart (1986) described this form of written decolonisation as transfer of power from one group of men to another.

Going by the foregoing, correctly written decolonisation attempts should not only be restricted to the colonial and post-colonial eras but rather pierced much deeper and establish the space and influence of women even in mediaeval periods.

5.8 Conclusion

There might be unanswered questions, but the knowledge acquired and shared in this chapter is enough to throw light on one of the development processes of the published history of Zambian pre-colonial era. (Maquet, 1972). Due to her migration from the Congo, Mwenya Mukulu's personal and cultural identity spread to Northern Rhodesia's (now Zambia) soil within a short time. It does not matter whether or not the current Lungu met other migrants who adopted their culture. What matters is that she contributed to the growth and development of the Lungu people. The descendants of different waves can still be distinguished in the present population (Maquet, 1972). The migration of Mwenya Mukulu with other relatives from Congo was one such wave.

The chapter established that women demonstrated effective leadership in Zambia and other African countries. Mwenya Mukulu remains as a good example of many other women who took charge of critical roles in pre-colonial era as she traversed through various obstacles to give identity to modern day Lungu speaking people of Zambia. This might help future generations to understand that women contributed to the development of their respective societies from as far back as pre-colonial period. It is therefore prudent for modern day scholars to strive to correctly account for legendry women such as Mwenya Mukulu.

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CHAPTER 6

Roles and Rights of Women as Custodians of Legal and Moral Values Through Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Lesotho: The Pre-colonial Era

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6.1 Introduction

European authors of the pre-colonial era recorded the lifestyle and customs of Basotho based on their observations and perspectives of Basotho. They generally had conceptions of gender division, with women viewed as minorities subjected to abuse (Dutton, 1923). In his book *Basutoland: Its Legends and Customs*, Martin (1903) states that "women are merely servants, little (if any) better than slaves, with few rights or privileges of their own, and utterly at the mercy of their husbands" (p. 41). Unmarried women were regarded as children of their fathers, married women as children of their husbands, and widowed women children of the husbands' heirs (Duncan, 2006). The European authors interpreted African culture

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using their cultural prejudices and experiences. As Stephen Covey (1989) puts it, "[e]ach one of us tends to think we see things as they are, that we are objective. But this is not the case" (p. 28). Each person's interpretation of these facts represents prior experiences. These distortions have been construed as the real reflection of the role of Basotho women in Sothern African society and have thus undermined their real value.

The chapter aims at rectifying the European perception that downplayed the role of women as custodians of moral and legal values in society. It focuses on heroic roles and rights of women in Basotho society in the development and administration of traditional justice and their role in the family structure. It reflects that women were pivotal in society, partly because they received the same training on the values of African life which are equally provided to men. The traditional institutional arrangements under customary law appreciated and acknowledged differences between the two sexes, that they are equal but different. Basotho society not only appreciated the biological differences between the sexes, but that men and women communicate, think, feel, perceive, react, respond, love, need and appreciate differently (Gray, 1992). Institutional trainings in different initiation schools and other forms of both formal and informal education of both sexes were designed in recognition of this fundamental fact and intended to perfect each sex in the talents and the gifts that have been endowed upon them (Ashton, 1952). The roles of women in the Basotho traditional justice system, family and community governance are also deeply rooted in the customs and values of our African people. These values have been passed from generation to generation and have crystallised into customary or indigenous law systems of our African societies.

The chapter outlines different heroic roles of women in Basotho society. It reflects them as rulers in their communities; as governors and pillars of strength in a family structure; how the values that initiation schools inculcated in them shaped them; and their roles in traditional justice systems and in marriage. It thus reveals that women have been custodians of legal and moral values for ages.

Basotho people did not write books or document their customs. As a result, this chapter relies on information gathered from the oral literature of the Batlokoa and Basotho to rectify the misconceptions of European authors. It also relies on recent literature authored by Basotho and non-Basotho on customs of Basotho, supported by case law of decisions made in the courts of Lesotho.

6.2 Women as Rulers

Although there was a misconception that African women are minors, women had the capacity to, and were trusted to, become rulers in their communities. The reign of women rulers in Africa has been practised since time immemorial as reflected below.

Women Rulers in Africa

In his book *Women Leaders in Africa*, Sweetman (1984) records important biographical information on the lives of about twelve powerful women leaders whose dynasties in African history range from North, West, and East, to Central and Southern Africa. The first is Queen Hatshepsut who reigned in ancient Egypt in fifteenth century BC (1490–68 BC). Egypt was the first great civilization and Queen Hatshepsut is described as "one of the most extraordinary women in the ancient world" (Sweetman, 1984, p. 1). The second powerful woman is the great Queen Candace of Meroe. Meroe is described as "Africa's second great civilization" which had so many great women leaders that there was a belief that it never had a king. The celebrated Candace reigned in Ethiopian in the third century BC to second century AD, about 284–115 BC. The third woman leader is the great Queen of Sheba recorded in the Bible. Matthew records her as the queen of the South (Holy Bible Matthew, 12:42). Queen of Sheba's wealth was portrayed by, among others, the gifts she bestowed on king Solomon. She gave the king "talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon" (Holy Bible 1 Kings, 10:10).

Further, Queen Kahina of the Maghreb reigned from about 575 to 702 AD. She was a source of the Berber peoples of North Africa's prophecies that reveal the future. The other women leaders are Queen Amania of Hausaland in West Africa; Empress Helena and Sabla Wangle of Ethiopia who ruled in 1522 and 1568 respectively; Queen Nzinga of Angola who ruled from about 1581 to 1663; Queen Dana Beatrice of Kongo who ruled from about 1682 to 1700; Ranavalona 1 of Madagascar who ruled from 1828 to1861; Queen Muganzirwazza of Buganda who ruled from about 1817 to 18–82; and the great Queen Manthatisi of the Sotho, who reigned in Southern Africa for about fifty-four years from 1781 to 1835.

Great Queen Manthatisi of Batlokoa

The chieftaincy of women in Southern Africa was not by virtue of their birth but by virtue of their marriage, and death of their husbands (Ashton, 1952). Where a chief died without an heir, the widow became chief in her own right (Ashton, 1952; Maqutu, 1992). Similarly, where the chief died and his heir was a minor, his senior widow or the chief's younger brother could act as chief regent until the heir reached the age of majority. Consequently, where the wife became chief regent, she assumed control of the chiefdom. When the son became a major, the widow (or chief's brother) would give him his chieftainship place (*Bereng Griffith v Mantšebo Seeiso Griffith* 1926–53 High Commission Territories Law Reports (HCTLR) 50; Laws of Lerotholi, 1903). Further, when a chief or heir to chieftainship was not capable of ruling appropriately for one reason or another, a regent was appointed in his place to run his affairs and rule in his place. The regent assumed full rights of chieftainship. However, the regent could not pass the chieftainship to his/her own son (Ashton, 1952).

The Great Queen Manthatisi of Batlokoa is a good example of a woman who became chief in Southern Africa. She succeeded to chieftainship after the premature death of King Mokotjo of the Batlokoa. Queen Manthatisi was a Mosotho woman, born from the Basia tribe (Sweetman, 1984). She married into Batlokoa upon her marriage to King Mokotjo (Damane, 1980; Guma, 1962). Queen Manthatisi became the ruler in 1813 when the heir to the chieftaincy, Sekonyela, was still a minor.

Oral tradition records that Queen Manthatisi was a woman leader who led men's military armies with prominence in the whole of Southern Africa during the great turmoil among nations and wars called *lifaqane* in about 1780–1835. During her reign, she fought and won victories over numerous tribes, and reigned over vast territories. Her route with the Batlokoa army is traced from the west of Southern Africa in Kuruman, across to the east of the Free State. The ruins of her army can be found at Nkoe, near Harrismith, down to Joalaboholo Fortress at Ficksburg where she settled in the 1830s. Her territory spread across the Caledon River in Butha-Buthe up to Phuthiatsana River in the south. Fragments of the Batlokoa Kingdom can be found in some parts of South Africa such as Petersburg (now Polokwane), Botswana, Nquthu in KwaZulu-Natal, Hershel and Mount Fletcher in the Eastern Cape. Her lineage is found at Mokhotlong, Lesotho and the greater part of the country (Sweetman, 1984).

Among the list of those Queen Manthatisi defeated is Moshoeshoe I. She first defeated him in the Battle of the Posts (*Ntoa-ea-Lipitsana*), and second when Moshoeshoe I had to leave Butha-Buthe and relocate to Thaba Bosiu. Queen Manthatisi lived true to the maxim that *Mma ngoana o tšoara thipa ka bohaleng*, meaning that women are the most daring in difficult times.

Manthatisi was unusual in that she led her people during one of the greatest crises in Southern African history (Sweetman, 1984). However, the kingdom of Batlokoa grew in strength, might and power under the powerful, warm, but strong leadership of the great queen (Damane, 1980). As a woman, she particularly cherished and nourished relationships with many other tribes who felt safe to join the Batlokoa Kingdom due to her championing of intermarriages with those tribes. This expanded her kingdom greatly. Her extraordinary ability to guide, counsel and inspire the army surpassed all that had been experienced under different leadership of the mighty Batlokoa Kingdom.

Queen Manthatisi was passionate but highly sensitive about restoration of peaceful relations among peoples in her administering of restorative justice. This is illustrated by the fact that she never avenged her husband's death, yet she knew his murderer. King Mokotjo's relative, unlawfully and contrary to Batlokoa initiation rules, sneaked in and attacked Mokotjo, at Tsieeng initiation school. He brutally attacked and maimed him, leaving him for dead (Guma, 1962). Mokotjo never recovered from the injuries up to his untimely death.

As a full initiate of the values of the Batlokoa Kingdom and secrecy (*koma*) inculcated in initiation schools, Queen Manthatisi's ability to keep the murderer's identity classified surpassed all. The disclosure of the information would have led to war in the Batlokoa nation. She thus lived true to keeping the sacred *koma* (*koma* is defined as the secrets of the initiation school) of initiation schools. She stood true to the Sotho maxims that *pinyane hae senye motse*, meaning that silence is golden, and that *khatampi li nyeloa ke beng*, and *sepa-leholo ke la molata, la mong'a motse ke kotokoane* which mean that you have to be patient, compassionate and forgiving towards your neighbor more than a foreigner, because your neighbor is bound to offend you. She understood the maxim that *e khoptjoa ele maoto a mane*, which means to err is human. She had the power and authority as the queen to sentence the person to death, but she chose not to. This is a trait of a powerful woman who nourished and cherished relationships that would last for generations by forgiving the offender. She brooded over

actions, and calmed and quelled what was otherwise a volatile situation for the sake of unity of the nation.

Queen Manthatisi is the epitome of success and demonstrates that under Batlokoa and Basotho customary law, women had a right to succeed to leadership positions in their own nations. To this end, the South African government named its first Submarine in Cape Town *Manthatisi* in honour of the great queen of the soil of Africa.

Other Basotho Queens

There has not been any rule on whether a regent must be a woman or a man. But history shows that women have counted for the majority of regents. Another example of Basotho women who became chiefs in Southern Africa is Queen 'Mantšebo Seeiso, widow of Paramount Chief Seeiso. Queen 'Mantšebo was an acting Paramount Chief and ruler of Basutoland, appointed in 1941 after her husband's death. She ruled from 1941 to 1960.

Other women leaders in Lesotho include 'Mamohlalefi Bereng, widow of Lerotholi's brother's son (Ashton, 1952), and Toeba, a senior widow of Mokotjo from Mokhotlong. Mokotjo died in 1936, without an heir. 'Mankata, widow of Chief Rafolatsane's first son succeeded to chieftainship when the chief died in 1932 as his two sons had predeceased him. But 'Mankata suffered from mental illness. Subsequently, Lerato, widow of Chief Rafoloatsane's second son, was appointed as chief regent (Ashton, 1952).

There was scepticism that a woman regent might not rule properly due to her weak grasp of public affairs or competitions for chieftainship with her brothers-in-law or mother-in-law. However, the personality of the candidate and different political situations of each case helped determine the incumbents. This was illustrated by Queen 'Manthatisi, who ruled competently and fearlessly due to her resilient character, acumen and aptitudes, thus enabling her to defeat her rival brother-in-law (Ashton, 1952).

Another factor that influenced appointment of a woman as regent was the fear that an uncle of a minor heir might usurp the chieftainship from the heir. The woman was meant to protect the heir from such uncles. A case in point is the regency case of *Bereng Griffith vs Mantšebo Seeiso* 1926–53 *H.C.T.L.R.* 50. In this matter, Bereng, brother to the deceased Paramount Chief Seeiso, made an argument that in terms of custom and law, 'Mantšebo could not become regent chief as she was a woman, and

thus was incompetent to succeed. The court dismissed the argument. It stated that women are competent to lead, and that the practice has been to appoint widows as regents in protection of the chieftaincy which is at risk of being usurped by an heir's uncles. The aim of 'Mantšebo's appointment as chief regent was, among others, to protect the heir to the chieftainship from his uncle Bereng, who it was suspected would use the regency to obtain chieftaincy (Ashton, 1952).

A senior widow could and still can be appointed as regent even where the minor heir to the chieftaincy is not her son (Ashton, 1952). This occurred in the case of Queen 'Mantšebo. She was a senior wife to Chief Seeiso but had no male children. The second wife, 'Mabereng, bore the chief a son and heir, Bereng (Nyane, 2019). Upon the chief's death, 'Mantšebo was appointed chief regent for her stepson Bereng. In fact, the practice of appointing women as chief regents instead of men increased after the appointment of 'Mantsebo. Examples are five cases of women appointed as regents in Mokhotlong between 1939 and 1949, and the ten women who occupied positions of authority in the Bereng regency (Ashton, 1952).

Against this documented catalogue of great queens and rich empresses who commanded great empires, it is a great fallacy to suggest the women were minors with insignificant roles under African customary law. They have been great leaders. In fact, women are usually leaders by influence notwithstanding their positions.

6.3 The Role of Women in a Family Structure

Women were not only good rulers but pioneered in taking care of their families.

The Role of a Woman in Caring for a Child from Childbirth

One of the unique attributes and inherent characteristics of a woman is that she is a life-giver for perpetuation of future generations. She is a mother of all; she has to birth and nurse life for humanity. Casalis conceived that when a woman was going through the agony of childbirth, her maternal family called undue attention on her by fastening a few reeds over the door of the house she is in (Casalis, 1861). The family isolated the woman in the house for two months from childbirth. At the end of this period, the family took the baby outside of the house in the evening

and presented it to the moon. At this stage, the people believed that the baby was safe to join society without fear of incurring harm.

Research indicates that women speak 20,000 words per day while men speak 7000 words (Sematlane, 2021). This heavy vocabulary is important during the first three months after the baby is born. It is important for the mother to talk and equip the baby with vocabulary as this builds "the vocabularies that the babies will use for thinking, learning, and communicating later in life". It is during this critical three-month period that a reed fence, called *ka lehlakeng*, is erected on the door post of the house in which the woman with a newly born baby rests. The reed is a "symbol of the origin of humanity" (Casalis, 1861, p. 191). It shows that men are not supposed to enter the house, in order to allow this important nurturing period for the mother: *ke ka motsoetseng*. The understanding was that if left with a man, the baby might not be able to learn to speak. Any man who did not respect such a sacred place would be disciplined as this was considered to be a criminal offence. Therefore, the reed was not to invite unnecessary attention to the woman, but to allow the mother to nurture the child.

Subsequently, the maternal family performed a ceremony that was intended to purify the woman before she went back to her husband's home. The family slaughtered an animal and sent her to her husband with its meat. The skin of the animal was used as a carry bag for the mother to keep the child on her back until it was weaned. Casalis acknowledges that by carrying the baby on her back while conducting her chores, the mother provided a warm environment to the baby, kept it safe and secure, and rocked it to sleep (Casalis, 1861). Thus, as a life-giver, a woman not only has a physical womb, but has an "emotional, mental and spiritual womb" (Munroe, 1978, p. 130).

A Woman as a Mother to Her Family

In his book *The Basuto*, Casalis paints a picture of a woman as a slave to her family. He indicates that each Basuto family depends solely on the woman for the preparation of food and general comfort, due to the Basotho's exaggerated notions of differentiating the gender of men from women (Casalis, 1861). He states that the burdened woman wakes up in the early morning to fetch water to be used by the family during the day. She subsequently engages in an arduous exercise of grinding corn to

create flour, a task which takes about an hour or two. Afterwards, she cooks it in preparation for a meal for the family. During this time, men are generally chattering, milking cows and making preparations for herd boys to take animals to the fields. When the cooked meal is ready, the woman serves the family.

When the family has had its meal, the woman goes to work in the field with her hoe. She later comes back home with a bundle of wood and straw bound together for fuel on her head, draws water for evening use, grinds corn again, and cooks a supper meal for her family. When the women are not occupied with preparation of family meals, agricultural chores or taking care of their children, they keep themselves busy with the creation of pottery (Casalis, 1861) or smearing their huts with mud (Ashton, 1952).

Contrary to this view, women are traditionally caregivers who nurture their families. They are receivers and incubators by nature. They receive, incubate, multiply and give back completely magnified. There is a saying that if you give a woman a tiny little sperm, she incubates it, multiplies it and gives you a baby; if you give her money she gives you a home. Traditionally, therefore, *lelapa ke lelapa ka mosali*. This means that a home will be a home because of the presence of a woman doing her motherly role. Without her, there is no home. She is worthy to be called *mosali oa mankhonthe*, the real woman. It follows that a woman is the backbone of her family. Her dedication to taking care of her family is not slavery, but being a mother to all.

Women are not only respected under the Basotho tradition and culture, but they are revered. They are not inferior at all. It is for this reason that an insult which refers to "one's mother" is considered an extremely sensitive, serious provocation to an African man. Any abuse of women or lack of respect for mothers under Basotho custom warrants serious chastisement by the council of men.

Women as Family Governors

In the Basotho societal system, a husband is the head of the family; however, under custom, women are real principals in the family while the men are just the agents. A man has to manage the family estate in consultation and under direct instructions from the wife. In a polygamous marriage, each of the several wives has her separate house, fields and property belonging to her (Ashton, 1952; Casalis, 1971). The property belonging

to one house cannot be used for the purpose of the other house unless the wife of the house whose property is to be used has given her consent (Ashton, 1952; Duncan, 2006).

In a similar vein, a father cannot exert his authority over the property of a house belonging to one wife without the wife's consent. Where he does so, the court can reverse his action (Duncan, 2006). In *Senatsi v Senatsi*, a son who had succeeded his father as head of the family after the father's death requested one of his father's junior wives to give him three basins of mealies. The wife refused but the son took the property anyway. In a dispute before a Judicial Commissioner's Court, the court directed the head of the family, the son, to return the mealies to the wife. It further instructed him not take property belonging to her house without her consent (see also *Matiase v Matiase*).

There was a misinterpretation that when a husband dies, the property of each house devolves upon the eldest son of each house and the widow cannot inherit (Casalis, 1861). However, in practice the wife of each house is entrusted with the maintenance of the estate upon her husband's death (Duncan, 2006). The eldest son, who is heir to the property, cannot utilize property in the care of a widow without consulting the widow of the house. If he does so, the court or chief will reverse his action as well. This principle was articulated in *Sekoumane v Sekoumane* where an heir gave a herd boy instructions relating to stock belonging to his late father, which was under the control of his widowed mother. He gave the instructions without consulting his mother. The court prevented the heir from acting and advised him to always consult his mother before taking action. It is only when the wife dies that the properly devolves fully upon the eldest son.

In a same manner, where a husband dies leaving his heir as a minor, the wife becomes an administrator of the affairs of her house, subject to the advice of the male head of the family such as her father-in-law (Duncan, 2006). She further controls the estate and is guardian of her husband's children.

Bohali negotiations also indicate the women's role as family governors. In this case, the family of a groom offer the family of the bride cattle for marriage of their daughter, called *bohali*. During the negotiations of how many cattle are to be paid to the bride's family, men who represent the bride's family in the negotiations constantly report to the bride's mother and other women in the bride's family on whether they should or should not accept the number of cattle offered. The women are therefore in control.

The Seantlo Custom

Where the first wife in a polygamous marriage died without children, it was understood that the husband's family had fallen (Maqutu, 1992). Sesotho custom therefore permitted the widower to marry his late wife's sister, to live with her and have her bear his children. The husband had to pay half of the dowry he paid for his wife in order to marry her sister, or at least ten cattle. This was known as the *Seantlo* custom (Duncan, 2006). The *seantlo* custom was, on the face of it, viewed as abusive or belittling to women, but the opposite was true.

The *Seantlo* custom involved a lot of planning. It could not be executed without the consent of the deceased's sister and her father. Without the woman's consent, the husband would have no claim over the woman. It was therefore a voluntary arrangement on the part of the woman (Duncan, 2006). The custom reflected the role of a woman in upholding the family stead. However, the custom has fallen out of use.

Kenela Custom

Under Sesotho custom, a woman is married not just to her husband, but to her husband's family. As a result, when her husband dies, the woman, who is considered a part of the husband's family to which she married (Dutton, 1923), is expected to continue to generate offspring of the family to increase their number. As a result, her father-in-law may have the husband's younger brother take the place of his deceased brother. That is, the brother will assume all spousal rights and privileges over the widow, and raise her children. This is called a *kenela* custom (Duncan, 2006). The children born of this union are considered as that of her deceased husband and will inherit his possessions (Casalis, 1861; Dutton, 1923). The custom indicates the significant role played by a woman in the husband's family: "as long as the widow lives, the deceased's husband's house remains standing" (Maqutu, 1992, p. 119).

The European authors considered the *kenela* custom an indication that the woman was purchased by *bohali* as she was not free to leave her husband's family when her husband died (Casalis, 1861). However, in practice, the *kenela* custom could not be executed without the consent of the widow. If she disagreed to the arrangement, her husband's brother would not have claim over her (Duncan, 2006). Thus, the woman had a right to agree or disagree to the *kenela* custom.

6.4 Initiation Schools that Train Women to Take Over Their Different Roles in Society

In addition to the above roles, Basotho women have participated in a traditional justice system from time immemorial. The men and women who could administer the traditional justice system were initiated and trained in initiation schools referred to as *lebollo*. These are formal traditional schools which initiate a person into the indigenous knowledge systems, virtues, values, customs and practices of the society. They teach persons on how to be better men and women or citizens in future. The initiation schools thoroughly tutor and train incumbents in the applications and administration of the traditional justice system and its values, re-channelling the young at a critical age when their bodies are also changing. Thompson describes *lebollo* as "another fundamental custom: the initiation rites, in which adolescents BaSotho were inculcated with traditional values" (Thompson, 1975, p. 92).

In Basotho and Batlokoa societies, *lebollo* is entrusted to the king or chief and his counselors for proper orientation in the Basotho society. The queen is, however, responsible for administration of the Council for initiation of young girls into womanhood. The girls and boys are given the training at separate lodges and it is a highly protected or secret system where only initiated persons may go (Sekonyela, 2004). *Lebollo* is one of the fundamental customs which built Basotho as unique and powerful nation but which were demonised by the colonial powers.

Misconceptions of Initiation Schools

European authors noted that girls around the age of fifteen were initiated into womanhood at initiation schools (Norton, 1910). At these schools, the girls encountered an instructor of the women, *Motanyane*, but the authors were not aware of her role (Bereng et al., 2010). Further, a matron, whose duty was to watch over the girls, took them to a stream, where she sprinkled them with water, and informed them that they will get a visit from a sergeant (Dutton, 1923). The authors presumed that the water was used for ablution (Norton, 1910); they viewed this exercise as similar to a baptism (Casalis, 1861). Subsequently, the girls' necks and shoulders were smeared with white clay, but there was confusion as to what the clay symbolized. Some European authors believed that the clay was a sign that a change has come over the girls and they are no longer

children (Dutton, 1923), while others assumed that the white clay was a sign of uncleanliness or dedication (Norton, 1910). The girls placed a straw mask over their faces as a symbol of humility which guides their actions.

It was observed that during the initiation period, the girls were subjected to hard treatment to prepare them for their life duties (Casalis, 1861). This included carrying out agricultural duties daily. Moreover, the girls frequently engaged in what the Europeans viewed as ridiculous and hideous dances. At the end of the initiation ceremony, the girls' garments were burnt. The assumption was that this symbolised that the girls were leaving their childhood actions. It was also to prevent medicine from being put on the garments that would harm the former garment wearers (Dutton, 1923).

European authors viewed initiation ceremonies as akin to phallic worship (Dutton, 1923). In fact some consider the custom of initiation of girls simply a management of lust (Du Plooy, 2006, p. 114). Dutton stated that during the initiation ceremony, a healthy matron was selected to medicate the girls so that they would take after her and become fruitful persons (Dutton, 1923). The authors did, however, acknowledge that there was a possibility that they lacked appreciation of the custom as it seemed to strengthen a bond of a tribe, promoted collectivism and was a mark of the young respecting the old (Dutton, 1923).

The True Purposes of Lebollo

It is imperative to provide a true account of the actual purpose of *lebollo*.

Lebollo as Basis of Training on Societal Values and Direction

Although Europeans viewed *lebollo* as a phallic worship that mistreated women, it is an educational foundation for training young women and men about their real unique role and rights and responsibilities in society in adulthood. Girls learn "rudimentary principles of motherhood… the duties of wives to husbands, to State and to the Chief" (Molema, 1963, pp. 122–123).

According to Matšela (1990), *lebollo* consists of seven traits. The first one is cleanliness and purity (*bohloeki*). The second one is cognition (*thuto kelello*), the third is virtues, values and excellence (*makhabane*). Economic sustainable development (*leruo - mphemphe ea lapisa molekane motho o*

khonoa ke sa ntlo ea hae) is the fourth trait. This is followed by national secrets and general confidentiality (*makunutu* or k*oma* and *pinyane ha e senye motse*); patriotism and warriorship (*Bonatla - kabeloa manong*); creativity, innovation and eloquence (*boqapi le bokheleke*) (Matšela, 1990, pp. 53–56). The initiation schools inculcate these traits into the initiates. The main objective of the school is to teach the Basotho "custom in all its completeness" in so far as it relates to womanhood and manhood and the type of behaviour required for the law-abiding Mosotho (Moitse, 1994). The school teaches them humility, respect and obedience (Ashton, 1952). In recording these trainings, Ashton (1952, p. 46) calls initiation schools under custom a formal system or institution of education, "marking and affecting transition from adolescence to adulthood".

Mission of Instructors of Women in *Lebollo*

The initiation instructors/facilitators are called *Basuoe*. The name is from the term *ho suoa*, that is, to make supple. *Basuoe* are elderly men and women of substantial political, economic and social standing, openly known as patrons of virtues. The chief or chieftainess, with the advice of his or her cabinet, carefully selects these men or women. Their mission is to train the young men and women in all the spheres of life and the general enhancement of communal traits such as hard work, perseverance, service to one's nation and patriotism. These are achieved by role modelling by the *Basuoe*. In particular, women are trained in these traits as they are mothers.

Amongst the important lessons, the facilitators teach the initiates how to deal with and welcome suffering and problems as life challenges. They train one to endure and experience suffering as a necessary step for human growth and success. As Maharasoa puts it, "[t]his is one aspect of education where Lebollo gains an upper hand over most HE [Higher Education systems]. Until recently, HE has always attached little attention to matters of emotional intelligence such as perseverance" (Maharasoa & Maharasoa, 2004, p. 110). It is argued that modern education's failure to attend to emotional intelligence has led to many suicides committed by African teenagers of today. These teenagers cannot withstand pain, problems and suffering and they "withdraw" from such pain though suicide (Peck, 1978).

Maxims such as *Mosali o ngalla motšeo* (a woman has to withstand any challenges and hardships and continue to serve the whole family) have been cited to demonstrate the oppression of women as entrenching absolute silence against the abuse by men. However, in terms of Basotho traditional values, this is a call for endurance for the women. It is used

together with the similar maxim for men that *monna ke nku ha a lle*, the literal translation of which is that a man is like a sheep; he never cries. It means that a man does not have to moan about problems. Through these maxims, the initiates are taught that life can be difficult and that as soon as we understand and accept that truth, life no longer becomes difficult.

The lesson is that one has to be more focused on solutions rather than moaning over problems; the joy and the challenge is in solving those problems. This point is demonstrated by *Peck* (1978) when he states that

> Problems are the cutting edge that distinguishes between success and failure. Problems call forth our courage and wisdom; indeed they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually. When we desire to encourage the growth of the human spirit, we challenge and encourage the human capacity to solve problems, just as in school we deliberatively set problems for our children to solve. It is through pain of confronting and solving problems that we learn…. This tendency to avoid problems and the emotional suffering in them is the primary basis of all human mental illness. (p. 14)

To emphasise the value of challenges, there is a Sesotho phrase which says that *ha li fumanoe li tonositse*; that is, one cannot make any achievements without a struggle. They also state that *mohale o tsoa maroleng*, that is, one cannot be a hero if they are not prepared to suffer.

Further, Bosuoe taught adolescents that because a woman is the centre of the family and a source of stability in the family, she does not have to wash her dirty linen in public. The girls were sometimes given sexual instruction to prepare them for womanhood (Ashton (1952). These are some of the fundamental principles that Basuoe (and women in general) inculcated in adolescents, through the indigenous knowledge systems.

Although the above Sesotho maxims did not condone gender abuse, it is acknowledged that men have abused women hiding under the same customary traditions. Nevertheless, indigenous knowledge systems encouraged private family council discussions to resolve disputes where they arose. If unresolved, the matters were presented before a bigger Council of the village and even to the public. There were serious measures taken to reconcile the parties under the maxim *ntoa ke ea ma-lula-ʻmoho.* This is interpreted to mean that it must be accepted that those who live together will always disagree or fight. The maxims teach that life is about compromise. There was usually a stern warning to husbands to treat their wives with respect and honour under customary law principles. However, any persistent abuse was sent to a bigger Council of men for more serious

disciplinary measures. Any genuine intention to truly build or derail society has to focus on mothers, because they are "the fountain, portal, cradle, and mould of society" (Sematlane, 2021, p. 12).

Despite the distortions of *lebollo*, Casalis acknowledged that "…it is a symbol of moral transformation and high moral and religious ideas with the vows where [wo]men are superintended disciplined by '*Mesuoe'* or those who 'render supple' and initiate them thoroughly into the properties and duties of life" (Casalis, 1861, p. 261). A similar institution among Barolong is called "Boyale". Casalis concludes that even the missionaries learned that *lebollo* was the "cornerstone of Barolong and Basotho" (Casalis, 1861, p. 261).

6.5 Women's Participation in the Traditional Justice System

Women engaged in the traditional justice system of Basotho in different ways. Women were not permitted to sit in the chief's court (*khotla*) where disputes were resolved; only men were allowed to sit in the court. This was because the *khotla* was set up next to a cattle kraal, where women were not allowed to set foot (Maqutu, 1992). Despite this, the women participated fully in the decision-making processes of *khotla*. Research reflects that around 1938, women presided over native courts in their capacity as chief regents, chiefs in their own right, sub-chiefs or headwomen (Duncan, 2006). If a woman was chieftainess or chief regent, the men would discuss a problem or dispute presented before the *khotla*. They would subsequently send a male representative to the chieftainesss to inform her of the deliberations in the *khotla*. The chieftainess would give her views on the matter to the male messenger, who would present the chieftainess' views to men in the *khotla*. If she did not agree with the views of men in the *khotla*, the men had to reconsider the matter, taking into consideration the chieftainess' views, until they agreed with the chieftainess, since she had a final say in the matter before the *khotla* (Maqutu, 1992).

Where a woman was to give evidence in the *khotla* in a criminal matter, she had to send a male relative to represent her. But, if the *khotla* was moved from the cattle kraal and convened somewhere else, the women could attend the *khotla* and be heard directly without sending a male representative (Maqutu, 1992). Therefore, women's physical absence in the *khotla* did not affect their ability to participate in the administration of justice before the body.

Moreover, women had the capacity to sue and be sued in their own name. Women holding the position of chieftainship or widows had *locus standi in judicio* (Maqutu, 1992). The same applied to single women who are emancipated. In *Monyake v Monyake*, a single woman worked as a nurse and lived alone for several years. She sued a man for breach of promise. The court recognised her as emancipated and acknowledged that she had *locus standi* to sue. It held in her favour. In *Paneng v Paneng*, the court held that a woman who lived alone for almost twenty years after being chased away from her house was emancipated and could sue and be sued. Divorced women and deserted wives also had *locus standi* (Duncan, 2006). As a result, a woman could achieve the same status as a man in the eyes of the law (Duncan, 2006).

In addition to this, women fully participated in family councils which settled disputes affecting family relations. Their views were highly respected as they represented their houses in the councils (Maqutu, 1992).

What is more, there was a women's court that was led by the most senior woman in a district, namely, the chief's senior wife. The women's court had jurisdiction over matters such as women's misconduct, women's engagement in sexual taboos, or men who disobeyed women's initiation rules. It awarded punishment in the form of a fine (Ashton, 1952). The queen also led the Women's Council, which trained young girls in values that shaped them into better persons.

6.6 The Implications of Dowry Payment for Marriage

To conclude a customary marriage, parents of a young man pay a particular amount of cattle to the family of the bride, known as dowry (*bohali*), however, European authors considered this custom as a detrimental exercise. First, they viewed *bohali* as a nickname for a purchase of a girl. Secondly, they alleged that the custom of *bohali* reduced women to personal possessions or slaves of the groom's family. Thirdly, they found it to be a gateway to greediness. The family of the girl could demand a high amount of cattle in order to enrich themselves from the exchange. Fourth they believed that this custom denied the bride any consultation on her feelings or opinion on the marriage. Further, the European authors viewed *bohali* as a custom that enabled the rich and chiefs to obtain the most attractive women due to their ability to pay highest amounts of *bohali*. While it exposed the poor to become indebted to the rich by borrowing

cattle for *bohali* to marry their sons. In the latter arrangement, the poor make undertakings to pay back the cattle when their daughters get married, thus destroying the liberty of the young women. Lastly, they saw customary marriage as a transfer of a daughter from one house to be a daughter of another house than a marriage between individuals (Dutton, 1923). The authors do however, acknowledge that marriage by bohali is an indispensable institution that results in a life-time bound of the families of the bride and the groom.

Nonetheless, there are some European authors who were proponents of the *bohali* custom. MacGregor (1910) argued that *bohali* did not reduce women to possessions or slaves. He made an example with Queen Manthatisi, who was married through the same custom. Manthatisi was respected and obeyed, which is something the people would never provide to a slave. He further rebutted the argument that *bohali* constitutes the sale of girl to another family. The reason being, the married girl remains under the guardianship of her own people (her maternal brothers). As a result, the husband has to treat her well. If he ill-treats or abuses her, the woman has a right to seek refuge at her maternal home. Her brothers can charge the husband a penalty before he can have her back. Moreover, the husband cannot offer his wife for sexual activities to other men in exchange for money, that is, he cannot prostitute her. Neither can he sell her to someone else when he is no longer interested in her, as he would his personal possessions or slaves. They couple is married for life.

Moreover, MacGregor (1910) clarified that *bohali* is not a purchase agreement because where the woman leaves the marital house for no valid reason, the woman's family is expected to return the *bohali* cattle back to the man's family. Consequently, the woman's family has an interest in ensuring that the woman behaves and stays in marriage. If she leaves anyway, but has children with the husband, the husband has a choice to keep the children and not demand the *bohali* cattle, or to claim the return of *bohali* cattle and give away the children to his wife's family. In the event that the bohali cattle are restored to the husband's family, they are returned at the exact amount they were paid and do not accrue interest. With regard to the argument that *bohali* opens doors to greed, MacGregor (1910) argued that this criticism cannot hold. This is since the girl's parents will subsequently pay out the cattle they received from their daughter's *bohali*, when their sons marry. In other words, they use the same cattle to pay *bohali* to another family when they effect marriage of their son. Therefore, the family does make profit out of the *bohali* cattle.

6.7 Conclusion

Contrary to the picture painted by pre-colonial-era European authors, it is concluded that women under custom were pivotal in shaping the moral values and general influence of life in African society. Society gives them their own unique and special roles to excel in the talents, and gifts that are only unique to women. They are thus respected and revered for such special roles which they play in society. These roles have been misunderstood and abused in some cases. They are intended and used to complement their male counterparts, not to compete with them.

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PART III

Colonial Period

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CHAPTER 7

Struggles Within Struggles: Women Fighting for Liberation in the War of Liberation in Zimbabwe

Alice Chititi

7.1 Introduction

Women are considered the weaker sex in most facets of life. Thus, women still need to fight for their recognition even though there is existing evidence to convince nations that women can outdo men in many areas including in political wars. Nonetheless, women have proved their competence in the political struggles in Zimbabwe and other countries of the world. Cohn (2013) observed that

> War is a man's work. Biological convergence [i.e. deploying women on the battlefield would not only be dissatisfying in terms of what women could do but it will be an enormous psychological distraction for the male who want to think that he is fighting for that woman somewhere behind, not up there in the same foxhole with him. It tramples the male ego.

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Zimbabwean women have played significant roles in the Zimbabwean liberation struggles. This has been acknowledged by many observers even though there are forces that still make women invisible in the country. In an interview, Nyathi, an ex-combatant, tells Bhebe and Ranger that '…uniform and having a gun feels macho. You feel like a real man. You feel and you can do anything. You feel like you can conquer anything' (Guns and Guerrilla Girls, p. 123). This chapter seeks to unpack the hidden powers of women to remove the stigma associated with them in societies. There are Chimurenga songs such as 'Tora gidi uzvitonge' ('Take your weapon and free yourself') and 'Simba remadzimai' ('The power of women') that reinforce the multidimensional narratives contributing to a collective memory that accommodates demands for gender equitable participation, women's recognition within the patriarchal organisation of the resistance movements, and the participation of women in the struggle for independence. The songs sang by the Zimbabwean heroines and the *Chimbwidos (this is Shona word used in the Zimbabwean Second Chimurenga to refer to the women who were aides to the querilla soldiers)* were a source of motivation to the guerrilla women in the liberation struggle.

Participating in liberation struggles is not an easy task for most women in warring societies. Many challenges are encountered as the women weave their way into the liberation struggles and political arena. Women face prejudice, discrimination and sexual abuse in their quest to take active roles in political battlefields. According to Cohn (2017: 23),

> …war fighting itself has historically been seen as a practice engaged in predominantly by men, and the warrior has been seen as the quintessential male. The qualities considered essential for war fighting—strength, courage, aggression and the ability to kill—have been associated to masculinity, while, qualities such as nurturing, emotional expressiveness, and a preference for nonviolent conflict resolution have been associated with femininity. The cultural construction of gender has thus played a crucial role in shaping the organisation and conduct of war, and has been crucial to a fighting unit's effectiveness.

Women are viewed through varied lenses which may be positive or negative. Involvement in liberation struggles is a mammoth task. It requires resilience, diligence and unity of purpose. The factors which make women stand up and fight for liberation are discussed below. Women are viewed as just mothers as well as victims of circumstance. The involvement of women in the liberation struggle has eradicated their label of victims. The Chimurenga dances and songs were of a subversive character, mocking the

colonial regime and serving as a spiritual link to the Shona ancestors. The Chimurenga dances and songs offered female fighters resistance, and the opportunity to weave their life stories and memories into national historiography. The songs made women reach a higher level of spiritual awakening and this brought them closer to the ancestral spiritual realm. Elshtain (1995, p. 6) notes that

> The women's nurturing qualities, now muted must come out into the public light to purify politics and to tip the balance to peace and decency…the male element is a destructive force, stern, selfish, aggrandizing, loving war, violence, conquest, acquisition, breeding in the material and moral world alike discord, disorder, disease and death…the male element has held high carnival thus far, it has fairly run riot from the beginning, overpowering the feminine element everywhere, crushing out the diviner qualities in human nature….

Cady Stanton (1868) suggests that men have the physical stamina to engage on the warfront and they exhibit extreme animosity which needs to be counterbalanced by feminine infusion so that peace and tranquillity prevail amongst nations.

Elshtain (1995, p. 8) adds that

> If change is one's aim would seem to be insisting that women, too can take up arms. Western history is donned with tales that I call the Ferocious Few, women who reversed cultural expectations by donning warrior's garbs and doing the battle, and their existence as fact and myth seems not to have put much of a dent in the overall edifice of the way war figures in the structure of male and female experience and reactions.

Though women in political wars may be regarded as a drop in the ocean, they have managed to leave lasting marks in the liberation struggle narrative. Mugabe comments on the heroic acts of Johanna Nkomo. Mugabe (*The Herald* 5 June 2003) says:

> Through relentless effort and determination, she raised her family virtually all her children single handedly, ensuring that they receive good education while their father was in detention or had left the country to lead the struggle. She took most of the pressure thus keeping her husband sequestered and thus focused on the enormous challenges of leading the struggle for independence, therein lies her heroic contribution…. "It was an unanimous decision spearheaded by the Women's league. She was very helpful in mobilising women in the provinces within and outside the party".

All this exhibits the enduring participation of women in the liberation struggle. It shows their intrinsic motivation to conquer. In Zimbabwe, the fight for the liberation struggle involved a significant number of women who committed themselves to liberating the country from the rule of colonialists, including Nehanda, Teurai Ropa, Sally Mugabe, Ruth Chinamano and Victoria Chitepo. Women sacrificed a great deal as they shouldered various roles in the family as well as on the political battlefront. As a result, women possess charismatic qualities which drive nations to prosperity. The women were significant actors during the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe. Though Chief Chipanga in 1891 argued that 'women are not counted', he took a handful of dust from the ground and said, 'that is the woman'. Hartmann concluded that amongst the Shona, 'women are regarded as non-existent'. This brings out that women as people are considered as of no importance at all. This statement is vague considering that some of the credit men got during the liberation struggle was for the consolidated effort of the women and their natural agility in handling situations as well as information gathering for the benefit of all. Therefore, women cannot be labelled as non-existent as they endured and shouldered a large burden on the road to freedom in Zimbabwe.

7.2 Mbuya Nehanda

Mbuya Nehanda shaped and influenced the early African liberation struggle against colonialism and allowed herself to be captured to avoid more bloodshed. The Nehanda medium, Charwe, was hanged in 1898 for her contribution in mobilising communities against colonial rule. Before the hanging, she declared that her bones would rise again (Beach, 1979). Lyons (2004, p. 123) adds that 'Nehanda was obviously a distinct and exceptional character who rose to revolutionary ascendancy, but not by mere display of leadership qualities such as her command, courage and bravery, and planning ability, but by principally her spiritual power as a spirit medium.'

Robert Mugabe (1979) is quoted as saying

> Nehanda's importance is unquestionable…. In the early 1970s during second chimurenga War, one of her mediums went across the border into Mozambique, joining the ZANLA forces at their request, which speaks for itself. Women played an important role in the Second Chimurenga and in this role they were inspired by Nehanda's example. Her example helped to

> overcome traditional prejudices about women's capabilities, and this enabled maximum utilisation of human resources in armed struggle. That women today hold top positions in government and its various arms is a logical consequence of the efforts of the woman fighter now justly revered as Mbuya (mother) Nehanda.

Lyons (2004, p. 145) sums up that Nehanda's exemplary heroism is the spirit that guides every revolutionary Zimbabwean. The spirit of Nehanda lives in Zimbabwe and she is a highly recognised icon who has defied all odds. Nehanda was honoured on 25 May 2021, when the Mbuya Nehanda statue was unveiled by his Excellency Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa in honour of her relentless efforts to bring freedom home. A statue of Nehanda was erected at Julius Nyerere and Samora Machel junction in Harare to honour the late liberation heroine. The statue shows the personal contributions of the historic Nehanda, as well as the contributions of women to the struggle and national discourse.

The history of Nehanda's role in the first Chimurenga provides a link to women's roles experiences and representation in the second Chimurenga (a shona word used in Zimbabwe meaning an uprising or a revolutionary struggle). Nehanda Charwe was a spirit medium in Zimbabwean political circles. She was even considered a threat by the Rhodesian forces. Nehanda had amassed powers to mobilise the masses throughout the war escapades. She was viewed as a symbol of resistance and courage that interrupted the dominant discourse of the colonial settlers who found it difficult to capture and silence her rebelliousness (Lyons, 2004, p. 145).

As laid out by Lyons (2004), under the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government women would enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of political, economic, cultural and family life. Men and women would enjoy equal pay for equal work. Men and women could marry of their own free will. Thus, a number of Zimbabweans who took part in the liberation struggle were honoured by securing influential posts in the political arena. Lindsey (2001, p. 23) adds that 'Women are actively involved in many armed conflicts around the world and have played a part in wars throughout history'. In Zimbabwe women continue to influence the political environment and as such they have transformed the lives of women and children in many ways. Lyons (2004) went on to say that 'Women as cadres, peasants and Zvimbwido were able to free themselves to fight for the human rights. The focus of the revolution here shifts from just women's concerns to everyone's concerns.

The pursuit of equality for women was rooted in their liberation activities and since independence men and women continued the combined struggle. Nowadays, women are engaging themselves in enterprising schemes and they are empowering each other and the nation at large. The women are driving the economy to greater heights, and are also educating the nation.

The diversity of women's experiences of and relations to war is due to both diversity among women and diversity among wars. According to Cohn (2013, p. 35), women, of course, are not a monolithic group, but instead individuals whose identities, options and experiences are shaped by factors including their age, economic class, race, clan, tribe, caste, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, physical ability, culture, geographic location, state citizenship and national identity, and their positioning in both local and global economic processes. Their relations to war are shaped by, but not reducible to, these multiple factors; they are also thinkers who make sense of the multiple social, cultural, economic and political forces which structure their lives. The lives of women are shaped by their background, their upbringing and the environment surrounding them.

7.3 Sally Mugabe: 6 June 1931–27 January 1992

Sally Mugabe was a Ghanaian, born Sarah Francesca Hayfron in 1931. Sally Mugabe was born into a political family in the Gold Coast, Ghana, and this led to her militant attitude which led her to encourage women to join the liberation struggle. This reveals that the background of any child largely influences their choices as they grow up. Thus, in the political arena is where she also met the love of her life, comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, proving that birds of the same feather flock together, as echoed by Chogugudza (1997, p. 41) quoted in Ngwenya (1982): 'So we are fighting side by side with our men; we are not left behind. While our men are holding guns and deployed outside to fight, women are fighting in another wing of the struggle'. The Zimbabwean women have refused to be left behind, and have managed to prove that they cannot be dependent forever. Women are making names for themselves and making the nation proud.

In December 1961, Sally Mugabe led women to the Prime Minister's office protesting the 1961 constitution. She was charged with sedition and imprisoned for 5 years. She championed women's rights. Stott (2020) explains that although camp life was theoretically equal for both sexes, in

reality women were still discriminated against on grounds of gender (Ngwenya, 1982). Women and girls were still heavily conditioned by traditional and male decisions about what their roles should be. By contrast, Gisela Geisler (1995) argues that gender differences were suspended in the camps with women achieving a level of parity with their fellow male cadres. Sally was the first heroine to be laid to rest at the national heroes' acre. During her lifetime Amai Sally Mugabe even initiated rehabilitation of sex workers. In 1988, she established the Child Survival and Development Foundation for Zimbabwe to cater for the underprivileged children in Southern Africa. She is referred to as the gender champion in Zimbabwe. Chogugudza (1997, p. 31) sums it up;

> In such revolutionary conflicts, women are not merely victims but also actively work side by-side with men in support of the war effort. The position of women in liberation struggles shows that wars have to be judged not just from the position of men, but also from the position of women who incessantly struggle to sustain the force of the revolution.

7.4 Julia Tukai Zvobgo: 8 November 1937–16 February 2004

Another liberation heroine in Zimbabwe was Julia Tukai Zvobgo, wife to Edison Zvobgo. Edison Zvobgo was a Zimbabwean politician, had several degrees to his name, and was the founder of the ruling party ZANU-PF. Julia Zvobgo was born on 8 November 1937 and died on 16 February 2004. She was a member of the ZANU-PF after its formation in 1963. She was one of the first cadres to return to Zimbabwe in December 1979. During the liberation struggle Julia Zvobgo went through the agonies of torture and harassment from the white Rhodesian agents. In 1980 Julia Zvobgo was elected MP for the Midlands constituency in Zvishavane. Julia Zvobgo was the ZANU-PF secretary for women's affairs, an appointment which she attained in 1984. She addressed women's issues as she was one of the pioneers of the Women's League in Zimbabwe. Julia Zvobgo supported her husband and his colleagues by smuggling political messages to and from her husband and mobilising medicines for the injured liberation fighters. Women were significant actors during the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe. It is important to note women's motivations for political action in anti-colonial struggles. Women experienced emotional and physical pain as they sacrificed for their visibility in the political environment

that was mainly dominated by egoistic men. On the other hand, the women who participate in political arenas are regarded to be those of loose morals, which is not justified. The fusion of women and men in the Zimbabwean political environment has infused tranquillity and resounding economic development since women possess a motherly touch of compassion and resilience. Thus, the Zimbabwean women heroines have immensely contributed to the calmness in the political arena and hence the spilling of blood has been minimised. Women in general are quite liberal and have an inherent gift for sharing resources and provision of equal opportunities amongst all. Chogugudza (1997, p. 33) says that according to Ngwabi Bhebe, '…the women's actions had been the catalyst that had shifted the struggle to a more militant level'. Julia Zvobgo also suffered through torture and harassment from the Rhodesian security forces and in 1979 she was also among the group of ZANU-PF women cadres who returned from Mozambique. She assisted ZANU-PF in opening an office at the end of the Lancaster House Conference. Thus, the former President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, recounted that 'Our women fighters have demonstrated beyond all doubt that they are as capable as men and deserve equal treatment, both in regard to training and appointments'.

7.5 Ruth Chinamano: 16 February 1925–2 January 2005

Ruth Chinamano was a teacher by profession who had passion for freedom running in her veins. As a result of this she married a war hero, Mushore Chinamano. In 1950 Chinamano staged the first Black Sash demonstration with other women in protest of the detention of veteran nationalists Chikerema, Madzimbamuto, Nyandoro and others. She was a daughter of a war veteran. She was shaped by her experiences as a teacher and involvement in the African National Congress. She was amongst the founding members of the National Democratic Party (NDP). She donated the back of her shop in Highfield to be used as NDP office in 1an 961. When the NDP was banned, she hastily joined the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and in 1963 she was elected secretary of the Salisbury District of the Zimbabwe African Women's Union, which was a ZAPU women's league. She also headed the women's wing as the secretary of the Highfield branch of the Peoples Caretaker Council. In 1964 she was detained in Gonakudzingwa in a restriction camp near the

Mozambique border together with her husband and they spent the next decade in and out of detention at the camp. Later they were transferred to Whawha prison until 1970. She conducted teaching and nursing services for local people. In 1980 Ruth Chinamano was elected to parliament as a Member of Parliament. Chinamano fought for women's rights and gender equality.

7.6 Conclusion

Women played major roles in the Zimbabwean liberation struggles. Though some failed to be on the battlefield, they played a part in the liberation struggle in one way or the other. providing information and moral support. Though women cannot equal their male counterparts on the battlefront, they have managed to commit themselves to the liberation struggles to make sure that they repossess their motherland and freedom at all costs. Men also need women for them to win. Women motivate men to achieve all their endeavours. Women have endured a great deal in the liberation struggles but they have maintained their resilience. Some were raped and physically and emotionally wounded in the quest for freedom for all. The women who participated on the warfront were stigmatised as they were labelled as wayward and regarded as outcasts in the society, though they were doing it for a good cause. They endured it all for us to enjoy freedom.

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CHAPTER 8

Unsung Liberation Heroines: Women and the Liberation Struggles in Colonial Southern Africa

Butholezwe Mtombeni

8.1 Introduction

Whilst pre-colonial and colonial African women played important roles in production, religion and politics, their participation in these domains is not proportionally written in the Southern African historical narratives. The available scholarly literature on the liberation struggles of Southern Africa and Africa in general presents the struggle for independence as a gendered front. Furthermore, Mtombeni (2022) contends that the literature places more emphasis on the role of men in challenging colonial rule, with little or no attention to African women. According to Mtombeni (2022), this omission of the role played by Southern African women in the liberation struggles creates an impression that political agitation is a male preserve and nationalism is a domain beyond the reach of women. Whilst

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African women were confined within the shadows of anonymity during the liberation struggle, Thomas Sankara (1990), the former President of Burkina Faso, noted that the authenticity and the future of the African revolution depends on women. This assertion is a confirmation that the African liberation struggles depended on African women.

Beall (1982) argues that historians have written women, particularly African women, out of history. It is on this basis that Strobel (1982) maintained that women's history in Africa is still in its infancy. Strobel (1982) lamented the underdevelopment of the historiography of African women. Thus, in the colonial archives and other historical writings, African women are invisible. The invisibility of African women in historical sources complicates the reconstruction of their remote history. However, according to Mtombeni (2022), a few recent studies on colonial Southern African women reveal that women actively participated in the liberation struggles. They participated as cooks, clerks, informers, soldiers, wives and mothers to the soldiers (Mtombeni, 2022). Israel et al. (2002, p. 197) note that in South Africa women were called "titans of the struggle" for birthing women and giving them into the struggle for independence. The Pan-Africanist Congress and African National Congress (ANC) women in exile were given extensive military training and assigned to re-enter the country for dangerous missions (Israel et al., 2002). The ANC leadership valued the incorporation of women into the armed struggle. McClintock (1991, p. 115) writes:

> As President Seme said: 'No national movement can be strong unless the women volunteers come forward and offer their services to the nation.' After the Second World War, however, the ANC adopted a new constitution in recognition of the need to expand the movement and organize a mass base. At women's own insistence, the ANC granted women full membership and voting rights in 1943.

In South Africa, African women led strikes in the townships and on a daily basis faced the anger of the apartheid regime's security forces. McClintock (1991) concurs that Black African women faced on a daily basis tear gas and sjambok (whip) attacks, police dogs, water cannons, bullets and torture.

Zimbabwean women were revered by their male counterparts for nurturing and providing the maternal foundation for the struggle for independence (Mtombeni, 2022). According to Israel et al. (2002),

Zimbabwean women provided food, clothing and shelter to the guerrillas, risking being caught and arrested or killed by the colonial forces. With the intensification of the liberation struggle in 1972, thousands of women across Zimbabwe were recruited into the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) liberation armies to receive military training. Some young women and men became *chimbwidos* and *mujibas* (informers) who provided information to the guerillas on the whereabouts of the Rhodesian soldiers. Some assumed roles as cooks, medical persons and teachers in exile and in Rhodesia (Israel et al., 2002). Furthermore, Israel et al. (2002, p. 199) remarked that "…in the training camps, many women experienced equality with men, which they had not experienced before". This suggests that women played various pivotal roles in the armed struggle in Zimbabwe.

In Namibia, the Herero, Ovambo and Damara women were involved in Otruppa (an indigenous people's military society), which resisted colonial rule. Although McCullers (2011) contended that it is not easy to locate women's precise roles in the movement, she notes that they indeed participated in its auxiliary political activities before the Second World War. Furthermore, McCullers (2011) posited that the active participation of women in Otruppa was acknowledged after the Second World War. Settlers' brutality in the Old Location and across the country developed the political consciousness in many Namibian women. In response to the demolition of the Old Location, forced removals and attempts to curb illicit beer brewing, women responded with spontaneous protests. Consequently, they swelled the ranks of the Ovamboland People's Organisation, South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and other sociopolitical organisations to fight against colonial rule. It is on this basis that Chadya (2003) concurs that whilst there was gender bias in the formation of the nationalist movements, African women played a crucial role in liberating their countries.

In Mozambique, at the 1962 Congress, the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) undertook a commitment to promote active involvement of women in the armed struggle by establishing a women's organisation (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1984). The Mozambique Women's Organisation (OMM), born out of this Congress, became a vibrant women's military wing that operated in northern Mozambique (Arnfred, 1988). The President of the FRELIMO, Somara Machel, revered the organisation for its resilience and courage to fight the colonial forces. At this time, joining the armed struggle was a dangerous political move since

the militants who were captured faced interrogation, imprisonment or summary execution. Despite all these dangers, several women joined the ranks of the first FRELIMO female cadres (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1984). Most of them became recruiting agents for the FRELIMO. According to Isaacman and Isaacman (1984), Harcelina Joaquim, one of the first female recruits, fled to Tanzania with her husband and came back to recruit both men and women for FRELIMO. Juliana Lais and Hirondjoa Tonias also became the recruiting agents for FRELIMO in rural northern Mozambique, particularly in Cabo Delgado and Niassa (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1984). In southern coastal cities such as Lourenco Marques, Joao Belo and Inhambane, women were also involved in massive recruitment exercises for FRELIMO and other clandestine armed struggle activities. They were actively involved in laying the groundwork for the struggle for independence. Therefore, the involvement of women in the FRELIMO recruitment drive heightened political agitation amongst the oppressed rural and urban women and, consequently, many joined the armed struggle.

Whilst the gender oppression school of historical analysis presented colonial African women as *jurors minors* trapped in the labyrinths of the domestic sphere as agents of production and reproduction, Mtombeni (2022) refutes this portrayal, arguing that women were not restricted to the domestic sphere. Instead, they freely joined the liberation struggle and fought alongside their male counterparts, not as assistants, but as equals. Thus, on this basis, Mtombeni (2022) maintains that the notion that nationalist revolutions were patriarchal revolutions (Chadya, 2003; McClintock, 1991; Van Hook, 1994; Geiger, 1990; Erlank, 2003) is far-fetched and without merit. Therefore, this chapter, in an attempt to reconstruct the history of Southern African women in the liberation struggle, examines the limited available secondary and primary literature, arguing that, like their male counterparts, Southern African women played enduring roles in the liberation struggles of their countries. The chapter celebrates, monumentalises and honours the contribution the unsung Southern African heroines made in liberating their countries from colonial rule. It zooms into the active involvement of a few selected Southern African women in the liberation struggles of their respective countries: Queen Lozikheyi Dlodlo of the Ndebele Kingdom, Zimbabwe; Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela-Mandela, South Africa; Josina Abiathar Muthemba Machel, Mozambique; Mama Salome Kapwepwe, Zambia; and Gertrude Kandanga-Hilukilwa, Namibia.

8.2 Queen Lozikheyi Dlodlo of the Ndebele Kingdom (1855–1919), Zimbabwe

It is a disservice to Zimbabwean history to interrogate the liberation struggle without mentioning the names of Mbuya Nehanda and Queen Lozikheyi Dlodlo. There is abundant scholarly literature on Mbuya Nehanda and her contribution to the first *Chimurenga* (first liberation struggle). Therefore, this section pays homage to one of the least celebrated heroines of the liberation struggle, Queen Lozikheyi. Lozikheyi was the daughter of Ngokho Dlodlo and MaTshabalala, and she was King Lobengula's second senior wife and the foremother of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. When Lobengula disappeared, she became the de facto regent of the Ndebele Kingdom (*The Chronicle*, 21 May 2014). In an interview with *The Chronicle*, Phathisa Nyathi, an authority on Ndebele history, maintained that Lozikheyi was a formidable and intelligent royal woman who was often approached by the *indunas* (councillors) for advice (*The Chronicle*, 21 May 2014). She was a revered figure in the Ndebele Kingdom for her open defiance of the settlers, who described her as a "dangerous and intriguing woman". According to Clarke (2004), Lozikheyi is regarded as one of the best military strategists in the history of Zimbabwean politics.

After the 1893 *Umvukela wamaNdebele* (Ndebele uprising) against the British South Africa Company, the Ndebele Kingdom was on the brink of collapse and Lobengula escaped to Ngoniland in present-day Zambia. Ndlovu and Dube (2012) postulated that the defeat of the Ndebele by the Pioneer British Column took away the nationhood of the Ndebele people. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) argued that with the loss of the king, the Ndebele lost their shield and spear. These two arguments are farfetched because the leadership vacuum left by the king was easily filled by Queen Lozikheyi ka Dlodlo. She became the shield and the spear of the Ndebele people. Moreover, the Ndebele nation remained intact, and their homogeneity was preserved by Lozikheyi. According to the *Sunday News* (1 January 2023), Lozikheyi was prepared for this role as she dealt with foreign dignitaries and advised the king on various diplomatic issues. She prepared most of the war medicine for the national army, medicine that gave the soldiers courage and supernatural strength. Furthermore, she worked in proximity with Lobengula's paramount chief, Magwegwe, on issues of national interest and security (*The Sunday News*, 1 January 2023). This confirms that royal women were trained as warriors and nurtured in the

intricacies of political leadership. In an interview with *The Chronicle* (21 May 2014), Nyathi, referring to the royal women, averred that "Female offspring were above most men, and this was exhibited through their dress. They would wear *indlukula* (ostrich feathers) and carry a spear".

Lozikheyi rose to the regency seat when the Ndebele nation was rocked by political upheavals precipitated by the settlers' invasion. Whilst the Ndebele lost their land and cattle, she held a strong view that the 1893 war was inconclusive because the king was not captured and killed (*The Sunday News*, 1 January 2023). Moreover, the Ndebele warriors were not fully disarmed after the war. Her first move was to restore the Ndebele traditional leadership and repossess the captured cattle from settlers. As an inspirational figure and a warrior, she managed to stabilise the Ndebele nation and mobilise for the second Anglo-Ndebele war, also known as the first *Chimurenga*. According to Moagi and Mtombeni (2022), along with her twin brother, Muntuwani, she mobilised the regiments and ensured that the military was well equipped for the revenge war. The strategy did not leak to the settlers, allowing the well-oiled Ndebele military machine to take the settlers by surprise on 12 March 1896 (Moagi & Mtombeni, 2022). The Queen armed the Imbizo regiment (King Lobengula's regiment) with modern ammunition inherited from Lobengula. Within a week, more than 141 settlers were killed in Matebeleland. In response, the settlers built a laager (encampment) of sandbagged wagons in the centre of Bulawayo for protection. Fighting continued until the assassination of Molimo, the Ndebele spirit medium in the Njelele shrine, Matopo. British forces and the Ndebele army had reached a stalemate. Consequently, in July 1896, Cecil John Rhodes went to the Ndebele stronghold in Matopo and persuaded the Ndebele warriors to lay down their arms for peace negotiations. Queen Lozikeyi led peace negotiations in the Matobo mountains, resulting in a ceasefire and a peace settlement. The war was inconclusively ended with limited Ndebele casualties and Queen Lozikheyi was not captured or killed. She remained defiant until she succumbed to influenza in 1919, in Nkosikazi, Bubi district, Matebeleland North Province.

Under the leadership of the military genius Lozikheyi, the Ndebele warriors fought the settlers with limited causalities. This sent a bold message to the settlers that the Ndebele were not going to accept subjugation and colonisation without a fight. Although the first Chimurenga in Matebeleland was quelled by the settlers through negotiations, it signified the growth of the Ndebele political agitation. It is worth mentioning that

the war laid the foundation for the future African nationalism and armed struggle in Zimbabwe. It is on this basis that Queen Lozikheyi is revered for being one of the pioneers of the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe. Moagi and Mtombeni (2022) contend that her bravery and strategic prowess earned her an iconic status among the Ndebele people and Zimbabweans in general.

8.3 Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela-Mandela (26 September 1936–2 April 2018), South Africa

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, an anti-apartheid activist and wife of Nelson Mandela, is one of the South African women whose massive contribution in the liberation struggle is less visible in the available scholarly literature. She fought the brutal apartheid regime for more than 27 years, was in and out of prison, banished to solitary confinement, and single-handedly nurtured her daughters and socialised them into womanhood. In the absence of her husband, Nelson Mandela, she coordinated the African National Congress (ANC) activities within the country with great success. Despite her magnificent contribution in the struggle for independence, she was repudiated by the ANC and treated like a pariah. The influential members and supporters of the ANC in the country openly denounced her in February 1989. The media castigated her and consigned all her political achievements into oblivion. This section, therefore, explores Winnie Mandela's contribution to the struggle for independence, arguing that despite a plethora of negative forces working against her, she rose up the ranks of the ANC and became the Women's League President in 1993 and 1997 and the Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in May 1994.

Nomzamo Madikizela was born on 26 September 1936, in Bizana, Pondoland district, Transkei, Eastern Cape. She was a social worker and an anti-apartheid activist, known by many in South Africa as the "Mother of the Nation". Her relocation to Johannesburg in 1953 to study paediatric social work changed the course of her life because that is where she crossed paths with Nelson Mandela, the former husband and president of South Africa in 1956 (Cachalia & Suttner, 2011). Winnie worked as a social worker at Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, Johannesburg, and Nelson Mandela owned his own law firm in Johannesburg CBD and was already active in the ANC leadership and the liberation struggle. On 14

June 1958, she married Nelson Mandela (Cachalia & Suttner, 2011). It can be argued that Winnie's marriage to Mandela was also a marriage to the South African liberation struggle. It is on this basis that in his speech at the wedding, Winnie's father, C. K. Madikizela, asserted that his daughter was marrying a man who was already married to the struggle (Cachalia & Suttner, 2011). It is, therefore, not surprising that she shared him with the ANC and Black South Africans in general. Interestingly, du Preez Bezdrob (2011, pp. 62–63) states:

> Winnie identified completely with Mandela's ideals and vision for South Africa's future. When she decided to marry him, his hopes and plans became hers as well. She committed herself to the ANC and the struggle for freedom with a fervour that will endure through almost three decades of persecution.

Whilst the apartheid regime's brutality on Black people aroused Winnie's political consciousness, her marriage to Mandela served to exacerbate it. In 1960, after joining the Women's Federation, Winnie gave a compelling speech about the injustices of the apartheid regime and won the admiration of the audience (du Preez Bezdrob, 2011).

According to du Preez Bezdrob (2011), after two years of their marriage, Mandela was imprisoned in Pretoria for treason, and the semblance of a normal life disappeared. After five months he was released (after the state of emergency was lifted in August) and finally acquitted on 29 March 1961 (Cachalia & Suttner, 2011). He operated underground to organise the three-day stay away on 29 May 1961. The long imprisonment (1962–90) of her husband exposed Winnie to continued harassment by the South African government. In the absence of her husband, Winnie vowed to continue fighting for the demise of the apartheid regime. Her activism attracted constant surveillance from the apartheid security forces. *Al Jazeera* (3 April 2018) maintains that Winnie became an uncompromising anti-apartheid activist who continued campaigning against apartheid well beyond Nelson Mandela's incarceration. Her unwavering courage to fight the apartheid system head on became her source of continued troubles. du Preez Bezdrob (2011, p. 138) notes that

> Wittingly or unwittingly, the security police recognised Winnie's strength and ability to lead, and they feared her influence. That was the impetus for their relentless efforts to crush her, and according to the undercover agent,

> Gordon Winter, General 'Lang Hendrik' van den Bergh, the head Boss, was bent on stifling the political life of the troublesome woman.

As a result, Winnie was arrested on 12 May 1969, under Section 6 of the infamous 1967 Terrorism Act, and spent 17 months in unhygienic solitary confinement where she was constantly subjected to extreme inhuman, physical, emotional and psychological torture. Furthermore, she was, on many occasions, exposed to the terrible rigours and horrors of being a Black female prisoner in the apartheid South Africa, but did not break. When asked about the resilience of female prisoners, in an interview with the Institute of International Studies at the University of Berkeley, California, Hernan Reyes, the International Red Cross's medical coordinator for detention-related activities, pronounced that

> …female political prisoners were in many cases the stronger individuals. He recalled how women political prisoners gave prison authorities a very rough time. With internal rebellion and resistance, despite severe intimidation and force. Women, he said could be very tough. (du Preez Bezdrob, 2011, p. 156)

Perhaps this explains why continued police harassment did not deter Winnie from continuing with anti-apartheid activism. She constantly clashed with the South African government security forces because she was banned from attending meetings or gatherings but flouted this order and worked for the ANC. The Black Past (4 October 2010) posits that "Winnie Mandela's increasingly radical views caused some anti-apartheid groups to distance themselves from her". Her house was continuously invaded by the security forces. With the banning of the ANC, she committed to keeping the struggle and Mandela's name alive through active participation in the Black Consciousness Movement. According to du Preez Bezdrob (2011), at this time, Winnie inexorably moved towards the frontline of the struggle, and she became a serious threat to the repressive apartheid government. On 14 October 1974, she was imprisoned for breaking her banning order, and released on 13 April 1975 (du Preez Bezdrob, 2011). Despite unadulterated intimidation, Winnie used every opportunity to speak out against the brutality of the apartheid regime.

In May 1976, the Soweto Parents Association was established to look into children's interests. Winnie and Dr Mathlare (a medical practitioner and political activist who participated in the Soweto June 16 youth uprising) served on the executive committee of the organisation. When the

Soweto uprising broke out, she witnessed the events and was heard declaring publicly that "We shall fight to the bitter end for justice". In 1976, she was detained for being the instigator of the Soweto uprising. She was banished to Brandfort, the heart of Afrikaner nationalism and segregation, from 1977 to 1985. Although the chief objective of this move was to clip her wings and silence her, she became more popular than ever. She assaulted racial prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, injustice and whiteness by defying "whites only" signage. In the 1980s, she received several international awards in recognition of her contribution to the struggle against apartheid (du Preez Bezdrob, 2011).

Nkosi (2022) argues that Winnie Mandela's clothing style was an act of defiance to the Western norms fashion. She evolved and started incorporating elements of traditional wear into her dress sense and this was seen when she attended her husband's trial in Pretoria wearing a traditional Xhosa dress. Commenting on Winnie's sense of fashion during the Rivonia trial, Nkosi (2022) noted:

> She used fashion as a tool of defying the law in terms of embracing her cultural heritage and making sure that it was recognised in front of the law as our clothes were deemed unsophisticated and to be able to stand in court dressed like that, that drove the point.

Sometimes Winnie dressed like the American civil rights movement leaders such as Angela Davies, signifying unity in the struggle for the freedom of Black people across the globe (Nkosi, 2022). Winnie spoke through her dress code, which defied the master's Western ideas of fashion. By so doing, she rejected whiteness and what it stood for in South Africa: subjugation and oppression of the Black majority.

The available scholarly literature focuses more on Winnie's popular trial and buries her pivotal role in the struggle for freedom. Before she was convicted by the apartheid judiciary, she was repudiated by the members of her political home: the ANC (Trewhela, 1991). Whilst the mainstream media and some ANC stalwarts attempted to vilify Winnie and liquidate her liberation credentials, historical records continue to monumentalise and lionise her contribution to the struggle for independence. She became the bridge that connected Mandela with the people when he was imprisoned for 27 years. Thus, Winnie is an unsung liberation heroine whose achievements as an anti-apartheid activist match those of her former husband, Nelson Mandela.

8.4 Josina Abiathar Muthemba Machel (10 August 1945–7 April 1971), Mozambique

The Mozambique liberation struggle was fought mostly on the terrain of the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete. Mozambican women actively participated in the liberation struggle in the northern provinces. However, the names of these women remain in the background in the annals of Pan-African history because the accounts of the past were written from a male perspective. Mtombeni (2022) laments the lack of sustained scholarly attention to the role of African women in colonialism. According to Moagi and Mtombeni (2022), one of the reasons for the omission of women's participation in the liberation struggle is that the production of mainstream historical literature was done by men, about men and for men. Whilst Mtombeni (2022) postulates that the colonial library portrayed women as helpless and powerless victims of the colonial patriarchal order, available evidence on the participation of Mozambican women in the liberation struggle refutes this portrayal.

Among the most significant female figures in the Mozambican liberation struggle is Josina Abiathar Muthemba Machel, born with a twin brother, Belmiro, in Vilanculos, Inhambane, Mozambique, in August 1945. Although she died at the young age of 25 years, she made a mark in the history of the Mozambican liberation struggle. In 1958, at the age of 13, she enrolled at Dr Azevedo e Silva technical school, to pursue a course in accounting. In 1960, now 15 years old, Josina joined the *Núcleo dos Estudantes Africanos Secundários de Mocambique*, a clandestine sociopolitical organisation that was founded by Eduardo Mondlane in 1949 (South African History Online, 2017). The organisation and its members were always under the colonial police surveillance. It was in this organisation that Josina developed her political consciousness.

According to Mondlane (1969, p. 65), Josina was fully conscious of the objectives of colonial education, and she stated that

> The colonialists wanted to deceive us with their teaching; they taught us only the history of Portugal, the geography of Portugal; they wanted to form in us a passive mentality, to make us resigned to their domination. We couldn't react openly, but we were aware of their lie; we knew that what they said was false; that we were Mozambicans, and we could never be Portuguese.

The objectives of colonial education coupled with the settlers' brutality compelled Josina to join the struggle for independence. Whilst a student at the technical school, she became a member of the underground FRELIMO cell. In 1963, at the age of 18, the astute and politicised Josina, with other students, embarked on a revolutionary journey to join FRELIMO in Tanzania. They were unfortunately arrested, extradited back to Mozambique and imprisoned. Her imprisonment was ended after 6 months by the FRELIMO international campaign for her release (South African History Online, 2017). Although she was constantly under surveillance by the Portuguese police, together with a group of students, she successfully escaped to Tanzania. The journey to Tanzania, via various African countries, was long and arduous. This long journey is a confirmation of Josina's determination to sacrifice everything for the struggle.

In Tanzania, Josina received military training and became an asset to the struggle. In 1965, at the age of 20, Josina's devotion to the struggle was rewarded by the position of assistant director of the Mozambique Institute, a residential education centre for Mozambican students in Tanzania (Face2Face Africa, 28 October 2018). Moreover, she is credited for the establishment of the Women's Detachment (Destacamento Feminino) in 1967. The organisation was an effective instrument of women's recruitment and mobilisation. According to South African History Online (2017), in 1968, Josina identified the need for organised health centres, schools and childcare provision in the liberated zones to meet the needs of the displaced, wounded and traumatised victims of the war. It is, therefore, not surprising that she rose through the FRELIMO ranks to head the women's section in the organisation's Department of Social Affairs in 1969, at the age of 24. The position required her to travel outside the country and attend meetings about women's plight and rights. She used this opportunity to advocate for equal participation and treatment of women in political, economic and social life. Thus, Josina became an honest advocate for women's emancipation and their active involvement in the liberation struggle. In May 1969, she married Samora Machel in Southern Tanzania. Unfortunately, her health deteriorated in 1970 and she died in Dar es Salaam on 7 April 1971, at the age of 25.

Josina's success in the liberation movement encouraged many women to join the struggle for independence. South African History Online (2017), commenting on Josina, notes that

> Her inspirational life is perhaps representative of the thousands of female combatants who joined not only the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) after it was formed in June 1962, but also the Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola (MPLA) of Angola, the Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) of Guinea Bissau, or the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) who should not become forgotten in the annals of Pan-African history. Their names, voices, memories, experiences and deeds have almost been erased and silenced out of patriarchal history.

Josina defied all odds and refused to wait for freedom to be served to her by her male counterparts. Although she died young and did not live to witness the liberation of her country, Mozambique, she played a pivotal role in the struggle for independence. Furthermore, she laid a solid foundation for the economic empowerment and emancipation of Mozambican women. She lived a purposeful and inspiring life that was terminated prematurely in the trenches of the struggle for self-determination. Her life was tremendously committed to a revolutionary cause and service of the betterment of her society. Josina's political achievements surpassed those of her male revolutionaries and deserve to be monumentalised, lionised and celebrated in the annals of Pan-Africanist history.

8.5 Mama Salome Kapwepwe (8 August 1926–8 May 2017), Zambia

Dismissive historical accounts of African women who participated in the liberation struggle tend to mention them as footnotes. In scholarly historical literature on the liberation struggles of Zambia and Africa in general, limited space is dedicated to women, and men are eulogised throughout. Disappointingly, in some cases, liberation heroines are celebrated after death, at their memorials. On this basis, President Edgar Lungu, at the funeral of Mama Salome Chilufya Besa Kapwepwe, called for the appreciation, celebration and support of the liberation heroes and heroines while they are alive. Whilst Mama Salome Kapwepwe significantly contributed to Zambia's liberation, there is a dearth of scholarly literature on her. She only became popular in the media after her death. *The Zambian Eye* (9 May 2017) postulates that Mama Salome Kapwepwe's contribution to the Zambian liberation struggle is less known possibly because she was overshadowed by her more popular and active husband. It can be argued

that her contribution is mentioned in footnotes because the production of mainstream historical literature is gendered; it is done by men, about men, for men (Moagi & Mtombeni, 2022). Moreover, the statement by Dr Mwaanga in the *Zambia Daily Mail Limited* (11 May 2017) at Mama Salome's funeral that "She firmly stood by her husband, the late Mr Simon Kapwepwe, who was deeply involved in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid in Africa and elsewhere" confirms that women's contribution to the liberation struggle is consciously or unconsciously consigned to the background.

Mama Salome Kapwepwe was born as Salome Chilufya Besa on 8 August 1926, at Lubwa, Chinsali, Muchinga Province (*The Zambian Eye*, 9 May 2017). It is worth noting that Muchinga Province is considered the home of Zambian politics. After completing her Standard 5, she trained as a teacher, and in 1946, she taught at Lubwa where she met her husband, Simon Mansa Kapwepwe (*The Zambian Eye*, 9 May 2017). They got married in 1949 and moved together to teach at the Copperbelt. Simon Mansa Kapwepwe was later employed by the Kitwe Welfare Department and they both joined the African Social Welfare Society. Whilst the organisation was non-political, it raised African Welfare issues exacerbated by the colonial administration. It is in this organisation, under the stewardship of Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika and Lawrence Katilungu, that their political consciousness was developed and nurtured (*The Zambian Eye*, 9 May 2017). Salome became active in the politics of independence and the welfare of her countrymen.

In 1956, the couple relocated to Lusaka to join the liberation struggle. There, they joined Harry Nkumbul's African National Congress Party. Salome became one of the most competent political organisers, committed to attaining freedom from the colonists. The Kampwempwes later joined the newly formed political outfit, the United National Independence Party (UNIP). Salome served as the treasurer of the organisation and assisted in fundraising and looking after the funds. She was also made the custodian of the organisation's sensitive information and documents. Working close to her husband, Salome continued to further the cause of the liberation struggle by recruiting for the UNIP and focusing on the grass-roots structures of the organisation. Beyond independence, she continued to invest her time in the welfare of her people. Unfortunately, on 8 May 2017, she died in her sleep, at the age of 90.

According to the *Diggers News* (9 May 2017), President Edgar Lungu, mourning Mama Salome Kapwepwe, asserted that "Without Salome's

immense sacrifice in coordination with other women, it would have been difficult for the country to gain independence… Salome and others were great fighters who were team spirited".

Lungu emphasised that Mama Salome occupied a special place in the history of the Zambian liberation struggle. Chadya (2003, p. 153) concurs that after the Second World War, women across Africa played pivotal roles in ousting colonial minority governments. However, the top leadership of most liberation political outfits was exclusively male (Chadya, 2003, p. 153). This does not discount the crucial roles women played in the liberation struggles of their societies. Lungu, according to *The Times of Zambia* (13 May 2017), further pronounced that "During the liberation struggle, Mama Salome showed deep devotion, sacrifice and endured pain, performed endless and selfless acts towards others and exhibited great fortitude in times of hardship".

To appreciate her contribution, Lungu declared three days of national mourning for the unsung Zambian liberation struggle heroine (*The Zambia 24*, 11 May 2017). He noted that "Mama Salome belonged to the great and golden generation of selfless individuals who gave their whole to the cause of mother Zambia" (*The Times of Zambia*, 13 May 2017). Disappointingly, she was only celebrated and acknowledged after her death. Moreover, her contribution to the Zambian struggle for independence is absent in the annals of history. According to Mtombeni (2022, p. 1186) "The shortage of written sources in African history has made women invisible, leaving a worrying gap in the historiography of African women". This has reduced the field of history to the study of an exclusive past, as argued by Mtombeni (2022).

8.6 Gertrude Kandanga-Hilukilwa (1 January 1937–20 December 2002), Namibia

In the colonial and apartheid eras, Namibian women suffered disproportionately from the settlers' brutality. According to Naukongo (2003), they were subjected to the migrant labour system and pass laws and confined in economically unviable homelands. In the 1950s, the South African-controlled Windhoek municipality wanted to demolish the Old Location to impose stricter segregation and to curb illicit beer brewing, which was an economic mainstay of women (Sori, 1996). Sori (1996) notes that the residents responded with spontaneous protests, and this marked the

genesis of organised women's resistance against the regime. In 1959 women organised protests against planned forced removals and the harassment of local beer brewers (Sori, 1996). These protests were a turning point for the active participation of women in the national struggle for independence. Heroines such as Gertrude Kandanga-Hilukilwa were politically agitated by the Old Location protests.

Gertrude Kandanga-Hilukilwa was born on 1 January 1937 at Ombujekuna Mongombe ja Mbatera in Omaruru District. She was one of the first women to join Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO), in 1959. OPO's struggle was mainly against economic oppression (Sori, 1996). It is on this basis that she is often referred to as Namibia's first female hero. Furthermore, she was the founding member of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), later becoming the chair of the party's women's council and remaining an active SWAPO member for the rest of her life (Face2Face Africa, 23 May 2018). The main objective of SWAPO was to spearhead a nationalist struggle to free Namibians from all walks of life from colonial oppression (Naukongo, 2003). The continued brutal treatment of women by the colonial and apartheid regimes compelled a large number of them to leave the country and go into exile in South Africa, Angola, Zambia and Tanzania (Naukongo, 2003).

Women in exile were accepted into the military alongside men. According to Sori (1996), refugees, women included, underwent military training, and on completion, they were assigned to different tasks. With the banning of SWAPO in the late 1960s, the SWAPO Women's Council was formed between 1969 and 1970 in Tanzania by exiled women. Its main task was to mobilise and recruit women into the struggle (Naukongo, 2003). Due to the swelling numbers of women in SWAPO, in the 1970s the organisation adopted an official policy of gender equality (Sori, 1996). The policy gave women in the organisation equal opportunities for promotion.

Gertrude was considered a brilliant speaker and instrumental in mobilising Namibian women to join active politics. Therefore, she rose up the ranks of SWAPO and became the chairperson of the SWAPO Women's Council at Walvis Bay until 1979. According to The Wall of Great Africans (29 March 2017), in one of her famous remarks at a protest against retrenchment in Oshakati in October 1977, she pronounced that

> SWAPO is fighting for the liberation of all Namibians. We will liberate the suffering masses as well as the whites. Even the young racist South African soldiers, they will be relieved from their unbearable burden so they can go home.

Gertrude was frequently arrested for her political activism and was placed under house arrest in Walvis Bay in the early 1980s. She went into exile in 1984 on a SWAPO assignment to attend the Lusaka talks. She ceased being a SWAPO Central Committee member in 1984 and returned to Namibia in 1989 and served as SWAPO Deputy Head of Voter Registration (Dierks, 2003–2004). In post-independence Namibia, she held several influential positions in the government and in SWAPO. Upon her death in 2002, at the age of 65, in a car accident on the Outjo-Kamanjab road, Gertrude was afforded a hero's burial and was buried at the Heroes' Acre. Although she played a pivotal role in the liberation struggle, she is less written about in Namibian history.

Their lack of visibility in the annals of the history of African women who actively participated in the struggle for independence must not and cannot be misconstrued to mean that these women were mere passengers in the struggle for independence. Available primary and secondary data confirm that along with their male counterparts, African women actively participated in the struggle for independence of their respective societies.

8.7 Conclusion

In available scholarly literature, the political domain has been treated as a woman-free sphere that only caters for men. This abundant literature puts more emphasis on men fighting the colonial systems, with little or no attention to the vast contribution of African women. Women are presented as mere passengers who had no influence in liberation events; they did not influence events, but the events acted upon then. Their participation in struggles for independence in Southern Africa and Africa in general has been minimised by men involved in the production and reproduction of mainstream historical literature. Therefore, the main objective of this chapter was to rescue the heroines of the liberation struggle from obscurity. Their involvement in the liberation struggle was a double sword meant to liberate them from the yoke of patriarchy and from colonial rule. Women in Southern Africa played enduring roles in the liberation struggles of their countries as mothers to the soldiers, wives to the soldiers and soldiers. Although their contribution to the liberation of their societies is not written into history, this chapter concludes that they deserve to be monumentalised, lionised and celebrated in the annals of Pan-Africanist history.

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PART IV

Post-colonial Period

CHAPTER 9

Women's Struggles for Innovation in Colonial Southern Africa

Itumeleng Mokhele

9.1 Introduction

From time immemorial, humankind has continuously strived to improve their ways of life. In most instances, such improvements happen as a result of contacts between local people and those of foreign origin. During the colonial era in Southern Africa, Lesotho already had a large influence from earlier encounters with missionaries who had arrived in the country with their wives, who apparently, in one way or another, influenced Basotho women towards devising innovative strategies to improve their lives. Throughout history, most of the remarkable inventions spearheaded by women in Lesotho have gone unnoticed. It is only in recent years that concerned African women (theologians) are seen to be reclaiming the sharing and rewriting of women's stories by women in order to correct the distortions and omissions of history on "her story". Contact between people of different origins creates some form of influence between the

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two. The resulting influence can be positive or negative. Throughout the ages, women have always been drivers of innovation in various aspects of life. Notwithstanding their circumstances at the given point in time, whenever they come into contact, they influence each other for the betterment or for the worsening of the other. Nonetheless, in the context of missionaries' wives contact, the influences were driven by the former as they sought to see the reflection of their culture and values in Basotho women. They have struggled to see change, which in this chapter is referred to as innovation from as early as the pre-colonial era into the twenty-first century. However, the present chapter explores the influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women's struggles for innovation during the colonial era. Historically, women have steered the boat of innovations that have been least recognised. Little has been said about their struggles to see changes in their households, communities and nations. The chapter focuses on the household and community levels as avenues of innovation introduced by Basotho women.

9.2 Context of the Study

The chapter looks into the colonial era which came into play later after the arrival of missionaries in Lesotho. It is important to note that missionaries and their wives remained in the country even after it was granted protection by the British. Mohapeloa (1985) states that the Lesotho Mission was given an educational grant-in-aid by the Cape Colony, under which the Basotho had been placed by the British in 1871. The missionaries lived in the country for a long time after the colonial era; as some returned to their countries of origin while some remained in the country and still have their descendants in present-day Lesotho. The context of this study is historical and it helps us to understand why the missionaries' wives were still in the picture even in the 1950s. According to Mohapeloa (1958), nearly forty years after being in Lesotho, it is perhaps difficult to realise that 85 years ago (1872), the Paris Evangelical Missionaries Society was still setting the foundation for the important work of constructing schools.

9.3 Concepts of Innovation and Struggles

The concepts of innovation and struggles are central to this chapter as they depict how Basotho women transformed their reality through their contact with missionaries' wives. According to Mutlu and Er (2011), the

term innovation derives its roots from the Latin word "novus", which means "new", and its verb to innovate is constructed from "in-novare", which means "to make new". In Mutlu and Er's view, to innovate means the process of making something new for the first time. On the other hand, Tidd et al. (2001) in Mutlu and Er maintain that innovation is more than simply coming up with good ideas but involves the process of seeing such ideas to fruition and putting them into practice. Moreover, Schumpteter in Mutlu and Er suggested innovation to be imperative for economic growth, commercial profit and public wealth. In the context of this chapter, the concept of innovation is considered as the application of known activities in changing one's reality, as Basotho women were seen to change their lives as a result of the influence of missionaries' wives. While the chapter looks at innovation from the context of gender archives in Southern Africa, Godin (2008) argues that innovation is everywhere.

On the other hand, the concept of struggle is subjected to various interpretations depending on the context in which it manifests itself. Lerner (1975) posits that colonial and early nineteenth-century female reformers directed their activities towards extending domestic concerns and traditional roles that they were resisting. In this work, it is argued that struggles are multifaceted as there are those that are calm while others are outrageous and violent. While in some places it could have been the case that female reformers extended practices that they were seeking to uproot, in Lesotho the approach was different as women were largely influenced by missionaries' wives who in any case would not have wished to be associated with any form of outrageous activities of resistance. Lerner (1975) further contends that a major focus of women's history has been on women's rights struggles. He posits that the true history of women is the history of their ongoing functioning in the male-defined world on their own terms. In countries such as Bangladesh, the long history of women organising themselves against what they perceived as oppressive measures has been largely to claim their rights, and such initiatives can be traced back to colonial struggles (Nazneen, 2017). Unfortunately, the archives on Lesotho make no mention of any struggle by women historically. Even in the wake of unprecedented struggles by South African women against a number of apartheid policies that they found oppressive (South African History Online), no reference in Lesotho's historic material is made to women's struggles.

The Chambers Concise Dictionary (1992) defines struggle as "to strive vigorously in resistance….; to make great efforts or exertions; to contend strenuously".

While salient features of what is viewed as women's struggles are not present in most of Lesotho's historical archives, such struggles were still present except that they were manifested strategically and calmly. Therefore, struggle in the context of this chapter refers to a strategic move towards exposing Basotho women to life-earning opportunities outside their households.

9.4 Modality of Influence

Cultural contact between missionaries' wives and Basotho women was the major mode of influence. Matŝela (1979) posits that cultures change as they interact with and among themselves and also their environment. Even though the current chapter focuses on the influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women, it contends that missionary wives were carriers of their cultures and traditions. These two related phenomena somehow triggered some influence in the way Basotho women were interacting with their environment. In their struggle for change, which is termed innovation in this chapter, significant areas of influence espoused by the missionaries' wives are outlined. Matŝela (1979) argues that the extent of cultural change was largely attributed to foreign cultural influence such as British or French culture. Lesotho and its inhabitants could not be spared from the cultural influences of Europeans who came into the country as missionaries and colonisers.

9.5 Struggles for Innovation

Change is a natural form of human evolution. Before delving into the struggles for innovation by Basotho women, it is worth noting that even before contact with missionaries' wives, Basotho women had their ways of doing things. This is confirmed by Matŝela, even though he refers to Africa in general. He argues,

> there existed some expertise of sorts with regard to; regulation of access to natural resources, production of goods and services, transformation of such resources by means of human labour into necessaries and other things and the distribution and exchange of goods and services by means of trade,

> mainly barter, and by 'sale' of human skills, as well as the utilization on consumption of such products and services. Matŝela (1979, p. 33)

By virtue of transforming resources into necessary items, innovation was already in place amongst the Basotho people. For instance, night blankets, dresses, men's loincloths, belts, sandals, shields and other articles were made from animal skins (Matŝela, 1979). However, as men largely occupied and controlled various spheres of production, women's struggles could have gone unnoticed by historians of the time who took charge of sharing historical events. While change is seen as a critical element of human existence, for women, it is key to their being as they constantly seek to improve their conditions. As indicated earlier, some struggles are peaceful and calm while others are more outrageous and violent. Depending on the objective of the struggle, preceding characteristics can be seen in various struggles. However, in the case of Lesotho, the archives might have overlooked the struggles of Basotho women because of their peaceful nature.

9.6 Nature of Influence on Basotho Women

The influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women came in various ways. According to Matŝela (1979), tailoring clothes for members of the family was done by older men who were relatively free and such items were made from leather. Ambrose (2012) stipulates that Elizabeth Rolland opened the dressmaking school known as Ecole de couture in 1838. The school empowered Basotho women to learn how to make clothes using European cloth as Ambrose asserts that they were clad in European clothing. This is a significant invention on the clothing front as women began wearing clothes made from European material while still having their traditional skirts made from leather. This is seen as an innovation in the context of this chapter as it introduces the material that did not exist among the Basotho people and this invention comes via women through the influence of the missionaries' wives.

Ambrose (2012) states that in the 1940s, Elizabeth Rolland also established the first thriving infant and primary school in Lesotho. There were schools already founded by missionaries who had arrived earlier, though they did not cater for infants. Mohapeloa (1958) posits that when the Normal school, which later came to be known as Basutoland Training College, was hardly three years old, there were no trained Basotho

teachers. As a result, many schools were run by missionaries and their wives. However, in the case of the infant school, Ntletse Mokhati was the first Mosotho teacher with outstanding teaching skills. In as much as historical records are silent about her educational background or how she acquired her teaching skills, Ambrose (2012) is of the opinion that she might have been the product of Elizabeth Roland, though it remains a mystery as there is no way she could have studied in Cape Town during that period. Despite this being the colonial era, Elizabeth Rolland allowed Ntletse to be part of the infant school managerial cadre. The 1844 Annual Report of the Missionary Conference notes that Ntletse Mokhati had already been working as a teacher for eight years and was already taking part in managing the school (Ambrose, 2012).

Missionaries were devoted to completing mission work wherever they were stationed. Casalis, who was stationed at Thaba-Bosiu, later moved to Morija with his wife, though the period of his moving is not indicated. Smith (1996, p. 32) states that "…the women were pleased that they now had a missionary of their own, to who they could talk homely things". From the preceding statement, it could be argued that the arrival of Sarah Casalis at Morija de-masculinised the missionaries as, from the citation it is clear that the joy of the women from seeing the wife of a missionary was overwhelming to an extent that they called her their own. Moreover, as she regularly went to church, read and wrote, this gave Basotho women a new conception of womanhood (Smith, 1996). Not only did Mrs Casalis give Basotho women a sense of admiration, but she gave them a new conception of womanhood, which meant to them that women can do other activities outside their households, as they looked up to Casalis' wife who could read and write as she offered her services to the church.

Moreover, young Basotho women who knew how to read emulated the work of Mrs Casalis as they were seen teaching young children meticulously at the Sunday school. In a letter, Frédoux (1853, p. 58) states, *deux jeunes filles ou femmes indigène se tenaient debout au milieu de la salle, et pendant que l'une d'elles, un catéchisme à la main, faisait les questions, l'autre lisait à haute voix, dans le même livre, les réponses que répétaient aussitôt une foule de jeune voix*, translated as *two young girls or indigenous women stood in the middle of the room, and during which one of them with a catechism in hand, asked questions, the other read aloud from the same book, responses that were repeated immediately by a crowd of young voices* (author's translation).

As a result of Mrs Casalis' influence, young Basotho women began teaching catechism to young Sunday scholars who they made to repeat

what was being read to them. The missionary's wife not only made reading and writing in church admirable to Basotho women, but she actually made them to want to follow in her footsteps through their rendering of services to the church.

From the economic perspective, Basotho women began selling their labour in exchange for money as they became nurses for missionaries' children. Moreover, the notion of helpers emerged as Basotho girls were employed as servants in missionaries' homes. The missionary woman who had employed Basotho women in her home was to prepare the solution of soda for helpers to use as they did the laundry. All the missionaries' wives, like Mrs Mabille (one of the missionaries' wives residing in Lesotho), could do was to watch over women as, she "Mrs Mabille" clearly stated that she watches over the women she employs on this work (Smith, 1996). The experience of selling labour to missionaries' wives gave women the economic sense of their labour as they could get paid for services that they did not get paid for in their households.

Basotho women seemingly had their preconceived ideas about the whites amongst them. However, when Sarah Casalis fell pregnant and welcomed babies into the Casalis family, Basotho women became very proud of Sarah, as indicated by Smith (1996). He further highlights that through Sarah, Basotho women appreciated the humanness of White folks, as Smith states that "their discovery that after all, white folks were human like themselves was reinforced by the advent of babies in the big house" (p. 32). It can be deduced that Basotho women had their unarticulated stereotypes towards their White co-habitants. However, the presence of Casalis' wife helped in demystifying such beliefs. For instance, from what Smith states, it is clear that Basotho women questioned the humanness of the whites who were dwelling in their villages. However, as little is said about this issue, history never told what assumptions Basotho women had regarding the humanness of the Europeans who lived amongst them.

9.7 Triggers of Innovation

Perceived oppression and desire for change by Basotho women during the colonial period triggered the change that later manifested after their encounter with missionaries' wives. The chapter alludes to perceived oppression because Basotho women did not openly articulate their discontentment regarding their sociocultural setup. While the struggle for change amongst Basotho women was subtle, it eventually drove the

changes that they were aspiring for. While the Lesotho archives are silent about Basotho women's struggle for innovation, the influence of missionaries' wives brings to light the latent struggle among the women of Lesotho during the colonial era. While a number of feminists draw a line between Western and African feminism, which was largely disputed for not addressing the challenges of African women, the chapter finds the balance in the theory of intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). In Lesotho, European women who were the missionaries' wives indirectly influenced the struggle of Basotho women through their contact as the latter emulated elements of what they perceived as womanhood. Through engaging Basotho women as helpers and nurses of missionaries' wives, the former also extended their control over Basotho women through race as a category of discrimination. While Basotho women appreciated the economic value of their services outside their households as missionaries' wives attached financial value to Basotho women's labour, they overlooked the discriminatory component of the work that they were employed to do, which maintained the class-based relation where missionary wives were regarded as "madam" while Basotho women were regarded as "servants".

9.8 Theory of Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality emphasises the multidimensionality of Black women's experiences of oppression. Young Women (YW) Boston view it as a framework for conceptualising a person, a group of people or a social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages (Young Women, 2017). According to Meer and Muller (2017, p. 3), intersectionality views different social identities like race, gender, class and sexuality as intersecting and informing each other. They concede that these multiple identities are influential for how individuals view the world. The theory as proposed by Crenshaw (1989) argues that what disadvantage people is not a single issue but a multiplicity of sources of oppression, as indicated in the preceding lines inclusive of gender, religion and other identity markers. Crenshaw (1989) holds that Black women can experience discrimination in a number of ways. While the current chapter argues that there is no transformation without change, the change which on the surface appeared somehow positive continued to subject Basotho women to the control of missionaries' wives. Mohammed (2022) argues that oppression is shaped by material, political and social conditions. This is clearly portrayed in the relationship between missionaries' wives and

Basotho women as the former were well off materially as their families in Europe used to send them items such as washing machines and other household objects (Smith, 1996) which the local women did not have. Socially, such materials granted the missionaries' wives a high social status as well as class, while Basotho women were seen as their servants who were controlled by the White women.

9.9 Methodology

This chapter is qualitative in nature, and archival study of historical documents about the role of missionaries' wives was undertaken. LexisNexis (2023) posits that archival research involves searching for information, extracting it, and locating evidence from original archives. It further argues that within this type of research there can be historical, non-current documents, records and other sources relating to the activities and claims of individuals, entities or both. While we might think of archives as repositories of materials that can offer historical background, Methodspace (2023) argues that more recent resources which can help in better understanding the research project and setting we plan to study can be contained in archives. For the purpose of this chapter, materials such as newspapers, periodicals, letters and books have been used as sources of information. Original source materials were consulted and analysed in order to determine whether they contain information on missionaries' wives. It is worth noting that materials consulted were not originally conceived to respond to the current research objective of establishing the influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women's struggle for innovation. Rather, they were intended for other purposes that are beyond the scope of the present work. Moreover, the documents were purposively selected from the earliest period of the colonial era as they were likely to contain the sought information. Content analysis of selected documents was used to analyse the collected information, which was mostly in the form of historical texts and letters.

9.10 Impact of the Innovation

Leveraging of Basotho Women to Managerial Positions

Basotho women extended their activities outside the household as they were engaged in the infant school. Ntletse Mokhati broke the record as a

woman leveraged to a managerial position during the colonial era as it was not very common in those days to have a local in the higher positions of any institution. The influence of Elizabeth Rolland not only empowered Basotho women but it made them see beyond their present situations. However, the observed empowerment was partial, as empowered Basotho women did not own their own schools but worked in schools that were still controlled by the missionaries' wives such as the infant school, whose proprietor was Mrs Rolland. While there were Basotho women who began to work in other spheres outside their households, that did not liberate them as they moved to another form of control. While in the shorter term it looked like missionaries' wives actually broke the shackles that were chaining Basotho women to their household chores and other social interactions that contributed little to societal well-being such as sitting for hours chatting (Turner, 1978, p. 99), these women carried out similar activities for missionaries' wives. Women got to realise their potential beyond the household settings and obligations and that gradually moved them through their struggles as they could see life outside their homes. However, their struggle was not a victorious one as they continued to be subjugated by missionaries' wives.

Seeking Paid Employment

Missionaries' wives influenced Basotho women to get paid work. While most of the work performed in their households was unpaid, the missionaries' wives introduced Basotho women and girls to paid housekeeping employment where they were engaged as nurses to missionaries' children and as helpers who undertook other household chores such as laundry. This change influenced the way in which women engaged homecare skills as helpers and nurses as they got to discover the economic value of their household chores as the missionaries' wives introduced Basotho women to the cash economy. This change was very influential as Basotho women were remunerated for what they performed for free within their own households. In as much as this activity was done on a smaller scale, it sensitised Basotho women to paid employment. However, while the influence of missionaries' wives looked rosy, it perpetuated the discriminatory class-based relation in which Basotho women were engaged in an unequal economic dynamic with their employers. They occupied subordinate positions which were not meant to liberate them. Rather, they were positioned in a

manner that made them life-long servants of their European employers as there would never be a time when the relationship between the women of African descent and those of European descent would be on par. Religion was used as the tool that made Basotho women submissive to the missionary wives, as they idolised them.

Creation of New Clothing

The dressmaking school exposed Basotho women to clothes made of materials that were different from their traditional clothes made from animals' skins. This not only changed the way Basotho women viewed themselves, but it also boosted their self-esteem as they learned how to sew at the dressmaking school established by Elisabeth Rolland. In this way, they gained skills which were entrusted to older men and that empowered them to make clothing for themselves and their children using European materials. While the learning of the new skill enhanced their self-esteem, due to their lack of ownership of sewing machines, Basotho women were still controlled by missionary women as they would still have to sell their labour.

Change of Basotho Women's Perceptions

Basotho women associated missionaries with male figures as they hardly encountered their wives. This made their first encounter with Casalis' wife a turning point in their perceptions about missionaries as they went to the extent of calling her their own. Smith said, "The women were pleased that they now had a missionary of their own, to whom they could talk of homely things". The impression derived from Basotho women's reaction is such that in their minds, there were no women associated with missionaries, and hence the excitement felt in their utterance. This encounter influenced Basotho women's appreciation of women of European origin and this essentially shifted their preconceived ideas about missionaries to an extent that they declared "ownership" of Mrs Casalis. However, such statements further subjugated them to missionaries' wives as they idolised them and rendered them special treatment without Basotho women being aware of the oppression that they were submitting to.

Bestowing a New Conception of Womanhood

The influence of Mrs Casalis on Basotho women gave the latter a new conception of womanhood through her services to the church. Basotho women emulated activities that they could do in service to the church. This gave them a new sense of womanhood, as prior to the arrival of Casalis' wife, they believed that for one to be a woman, one had to be devoted to household chores. Despite the above contention, Basotho women granted Mrs Casalis special treatment that placed them in the lower social cadre as they let the missionary's wife define womanhood for them as they wanted to identify womanhood with this woman of a different race irrespective of their different life experiences.

Abating Stereotypes Towards Missionaries

From the literature, it is evident that Basotho women held deeply rooted stereotypes towards the whites who lived in their midst. However, such stereotypes remained unarticulated as indicated in the writing of historians such as Smith (1996) when he writes that Basotho women appreciated the humanness of the missionary through the presence of the missionary wife Sarah Casalis. This not only affected their interaction positively, but even changed the paradigm as unarticulated stereotypes that Basotho women had were partially disclosed when Mrs Casalis gave birth to a number of babies. It was only then that they appreciated the humanness of the Europeans as they could also perform similar biological functions to the local women. This not only enhanced the relationship between missionaries' wives and Basotho women, but it also improved their understanding of the existence of the "other" woman though she was of a different origin. It is evident that the origin of stereotypes held by Basotho women had been unquestioned, yet the emphasis on the humanness of missionaries reflects the multiplicity of elements that triggered their curiosity, which include among others race, gender and religion.

9.11 Conclusion

The influence of missionaries' wives on Basotho women is twofold, as it was enriching and empowering while at the same time extending the control over Basotho women who unequivocally appreciated the presence of missionaries' wives in their midst as they had some preconceived ideas

regarding the humanness of missionaries. Despite continuing to put Basotho women under a new form of oppression, the missionaries' wives enhanced the former's sense of womanhood as observing the wives performing tasks such as reading and writing in church gave Basotho women another meaning of womanhood which allowed them to see womanhood beyond the household parameters. They were also exposed to paid employment as nurses and helpers, which ultimately transformed the image of Basotho women in their struggles for innovation by subjecting themselves to the control of missionaries' wives. Future projects on rewriting her story are needed as history is devoid of women's narratives and experiences as it is told through the male lens and the multiplicity of Basotho women's experiences has not been not fully explored.

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CHAPTER 10

Gender Equality Narratives by Zimbabwean Women: Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship

Bertha Muringani and Josphine Hapazari

10.1 Introduction

This chapter contributes to ongoing debates on gender equality in relation to sustainable development goals. The chapter discusses narratives of post-colonial experiences by women in Zimbabwe, focusing on education, employment and entrepreneurship. In addition to personal experiences, the narratives proffer possible solutions to overcome gender inequality hurdles. Findings uncovered how Zimbabwean women have been affected by national policies and religious, societal and cultural practices. Lessons drawn from the experiences may contribute towards desired changes to improve gender equality.

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10.2 Context

Existence of gender inequalities in Africa in general and in Southern Africa in particular has been acknowledged by literature (Claassen, 1993; Nziramasanga, 1999; Tsotetsi, 2002; United Nations Women, 2018). In Zimbabwe, gender inequality was more pronounced during the colonial period and during the first two decades of independence. During the colonial era, for instance, women could not own asserts such as land and houses and employed women would go on unpaid maternity leave (Madhuku, 2001). Concerning education, colonial educational administrators insisted that girls who became pregnant had to leave school, a policy that Zimbabwe retained after independence (Seidman, 1984). This resulted in many girls dropping out of secondary school often because of pregnancy. However, in 2019 the country amended the Education Act to prohibit state schools from banning pregnant students from attending school (Zimbabwe Education Amendment Act, 2019). Since independence, significant effort has been made to conscientise women of their rights to well-being and steps have been taken to redress gender inequalities. Several women conferences have been held for this cause, for example, the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women held in China and was attended by women from Zimbabwe and other Southern Africa countries.

As a result of the efforts, a movement towards reducing inequality was ushered in, introducing policies meant to increase opportunities for women. In 1999, findings of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training in Zimbabwe indicated that gender disparities persisted at all levels of education. According to Chabaya et al. (2009, p. 235), the Nziramasanga Commission findings led to the launching of the National Gender Policy in 2004 whose goal, among others, was "to eliminate all negative economic, social and political policies, cultural and religious practices that impede equality and equity of sexes". The implication of this goal is that the Zimbabwean government would take stern measures to attain gender equality in the nation. Affirmative action is one example of policies used by the Zimbabwean government to reduce gender inequality in education and employment. For instance, for highly competitive university programmes such as Accounts and Medicine, female students would qualify with points slightly lower than those of male students. This was meant to increase opportunities for females because they are generally disadvantaged in society. Although the policies have been received with mixed feelings and their implementation and

enforcement have been reported ineffective (Mareva, 2014; Musingafi & Mafumbate, 2014), they have brought about noticeable improvements in reducing gender inequality. Nevertheless, further reduction of the margin between males and females in Zimbabwe is still imperative because there are many factors hindering gender equality efforts, such as religion and culture, which have to be addressed.

Conceptualisation

The key concepts of this discussion are: education, employment, post-colonial experiences, gender equality, gender inequality and entrepreneurship. In the context of this chapter, education refers to attending school up to tertiary level to obtain a qualification (certificate, diploma, degree) that enables one to get formal employment. Employment is being formally hired by government or private employer. Post-colonial experiences are the experiences of Zimbabwean women after their country's independence in 1980. Gender equality refers to the principle of treating individuals of different genders fairly and equally in all aspects of life, including educational, employment, social, economic, cultural and political spheres (UNICEF, 2017). It entails ensuring that everyone, regardless of their gender, has equal opportunities, rights, and access to resources and benefits. On the contrary, gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment and opportunities experienced by individuals based on their gender, typically resulting in disadvantages for one gender compared to the other (UNICEF, 2017). It encompasses a wide range of social, economic and political disparities between men and women, and is deeply rooted in social norms, cultural expectations and institutional structures. In societies characterised by gender inequality, females are usually negatively affected due to factors like patriarchy and socialisation. Lastly, in our context, entrepreneurship involves the creation, organisation and management of a business with the aim of generating profit. Zimbabwean women venture into business to earn a living and to gain financial independence.

Factors Hindering Gender Equality

This section looks at the roots of gender inequalities in contemporary African lives. Literature acknowledges existence of gender inequalities in Africa in general and in Southern Africa in particular (Claassen, 1993; Nziramasanga, 1999; Tsotetsi, 2002). According to Heitner and McCluer

(2022), gender inequalities refer to cultural, legal or social situations where gender determines unequal opportunities and rights for women and men. This chapter defines gender inequalities as any disparities between women and men in the social, economic and political spheres that are based on gender. Gender inequalities are more pronounced in the global South than in the global North. This chapter argues that in Africa, gender inequalities mostly stem from social and economic factors such as patriarchy, poverty, gender stereotypes and socialisation. Kambarami (2006) observed that in Zimbabwe, some families socialise girls to value marriage more than education, conceiving marriage as a sacred institution. Kambarami (2006) affirms that in Zimbabwe, the anticipated destination of most Shona women is marriage. Nevertheless, there has been a mindset shift over the years regarding this issue because African women's perceptions have been transformed by education, westernisation and globalisation (Mhando, 2022). Thus, education has the potential to dismantle gender inequalities. Hence, gender inequalities seem to persevere in terms of educational attainment and these inequalities are mirrored in the labour-force to date. This chapter argues that some women's aspirations of preferring marriage as opposed to career advancement are prevalent in patriarchal societies where males are seen as breadwinners, while females are expected to engage in the triple role of women. The triple role of women entails the reproductive, productive and community service roles. This explains why Samkange (2015) argues that the basis for gender inequalities is rooted in how African societies allocate responsibilities between males and females.

There are multifaceted factors that hinder gender equality in Africa. In this regard, Samkange (2015) cites factors such as esteem, lack of support, tradition, stereotype and family roles. In order to achieve gender equality, there ought to be support for such initiatives from stakeholders such as governments, families, non-governmental organisations and people with authority. Regarding gender equality in education, Samkange (2015) blames most developing countries for not funding education programmes. Jayachandran (2014) attributes gender inequalities to society-specific factors. Some countries have cultural norms that exacerbate favouritism towards males. Norms such as patrilocality and concern for women's purity help explain the male-skewed sex ratio in India and China, and low female employment in India, the Middle East and North Africa (Jayachandran, 2014). Hence, there is more gender inequality in poor countries than in rich countries.

Research has constantly shown that gender stereotyping is one of the major causes of persistent gender inequalities (Samkange, 2015; Chabaya, et al., 2009; Kambarami 2006). Chabaya et al. (2009) established that stereotypes embedded in the way women are socialised hinder their movement into school headship positions. In Zimbabwe, females are socialised that leadership positions are meant for males, hence very few women desire occupying school headship positions (Chabaya et al., 2009). This explains why there are more male heads of schools than females in Zimbabwe. The responses given by participants in the latter study reflected that some women see leadership roles as something not meant for them (Chabaya et al., 2009). Under-representation of women in educational management is not only experienced in Zimbabwe but in many other countries too. For instance, Coleman (2001, p. 175) noted that "women in educational management are a minority in the UK, but they are also in a minority in most other countries". In response to the persistent gender disparity in decision-making positions in Zimbabwe, the government introduced the Gender Affirmative Action Policy in 1992. Chabaya et al. (2009) highlighted that social background has influences given that women have multiple roles such as wife, mother and worker. Another challenge faced by some women is application for headship posts since they consult their husbands first. This practice contributes to gender inequalities in the sense that if husbands do not approve, women fail to apply, resulting in more male school heads than females.

Nomlomo et al. (2012) observed that in South Africa, the discrimination and oppression experienced by women and children through various social policies and cultural practices worldwide is concerning. The main contributory factors to gender inequalities in South Africa are poverty, social class, power and race, which create disadvantages for girls (Nomlomo et al., 2012). In South Sudan, during the civil wars, torture, murder, rape and enslavement were common and these factors, coupled with inequalities in traditional power structures, left women suffering physically and emotionally (IOM, 2019). In South Africa, women were the most seriously affected by the apartheid system and they were subjected to triple oppression: as women and on the grounds of both race and social class (Nomlomo et al., 2012).

Some scholars cited culture as a contributory factor of gender inequality (Chabaya et al., 2009; Dorsey, 1996; Kambarami 2006; Lusey et al., 2017; Nomlomo et al., 2012). For instance, a study conducted by Lusey et al. (2017) established that 83.74% of church-going young men were of

the view that a man is the only decision maker in the home and about half (50.87%) of the respondents perceived that sometimes women deserve to be beaten. Furthermore, Lusey et al. (2017) highlighted that close to half of the participants (44.29%) agreed that it is women's responsibility to prevent pregnancy. These attitudes co-existed with a few gender-equitable norms as 82.70% agreed on the importance of joint decisions concerning family planning. In explaining the roots of gender inequalities in Africa, Dorsey (1996, p. 30) elucidates, "From an early age, daughters are groomed for their marriage roles of wife, mother and food provider … and they are conditioned from an early age to believe that a woman is inferior to a man and that her place is in the home". This finding suggests that in the 1990s, socialisation of girls focused on preparing them for marriage and the domestic sphere with husbands expected to provide for their needs. Currently, most African mindsets have been transformed by education (Mhando, 2022). Thus, culture and patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of any form of control over their future aspirations. It is imperative to examine the root cause of gender imbalances so as to come up with appropriate mitigation strategies to reverse gender inequality in society (Dorsey, 1996). Some of the causes of inequality in Zimbabwe are found in the economic arrangements in the country and some are based on the colonial past, which provided for menial jobs for men in industry with no places for African women (Samkange, 2015). Prior studies focused on the drivers of gender inequalities, gender narratives on education issues and how women were socialised in ancient times (Chabaya, et al., 2009; Dorsey, 1996; Musingafi & Mafumbate, 2014; Nomlomo et al., 2012). There is scant literature on women's narratives on key issues central to gender equality. Therefore, this chapter is closing this literature gap by exploring gender equality narratives by Zimbabwean women on education, employment and entrepreneurship issues, thereby contributing insights to the gender equality discourse.

10.3 Methodology

The chapter utilised a qualitative approach and phenomenology research design in its course of conduct. Furthermore, triangulation was employed whereby three methods were utilised for data collection. Firstly, we used desktop research which entails reviewing research done by other scholars on gender inequalities. A systematic review of literature was conducted to

identify relevant documents from Google Scholar and also research that is indexed by Scopus, ScienceDirect, Springer and Sage. Secondly, we collected qualitative data through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine women. The selection criteria used was gender, employment status and citizenship. We targeted Zimbabwean females who had spent at least two years being unemployed. These interviews were appropriate since they informed this chapter with significant information on gender inequalities as understood by women themselves. In order to capture detailed sets of notes during interviews, an audio recorder was used which enabled us to enhance the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data collected. Apart from these two methods, we also made use of our own experience given that both of us are adult Zimbabwean females with a wealth of experience, offering data significant for the chapter. Being born and raised in Zimbabwe, a patriarchal society, we have experienced many issues informing gender relations locally. Our sample consisted of nine Zimbabwean women aged between 25 and 60. These women were selected using purposive sampling technique. The selection criteria employed was age, gender and having spent at least two years without a job. Prior to sampling, written informed consent was obtained from all the study participants. We assured the participants anonymity and confidentiality. In interviews, it is important for the researcher to record as much detail as possible (Deem, 2002). Collected data was first transcribed from the audio recorder and then analysed manually through hand-coding. Coding was done through categorising ideas that eventually formed themes for this chapter. In the discussion of findings, anonymity of research participants was ensured by using pseudonyms and not their real names. Data was analysed using thematic data analysis. Emerging themes were validated by gender experts before the write-up.

10.4 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussions under the headings: education, employment and entrepreneurship, and the identified themes.

Education and Gender Equality Narratives

In Zimbabwe, education has been seen as a key factor in improving the lives of women and girls and helping them to realise their potential. According to the Zimbabwe Education Act (Chapter 25:04), all children

have the right to education. This legislation made it possible for both boys and girls, men and women to access education without discrimination, thus paving way for equality and equity between males and females. This section discusses the issues that emerged from the participants' narrations of their experiences in their efforts to get education.

Limited access to educational resources is one of the major challenges faced by females in Zimbabwe, particularly in rural areas. In addition, most of the schools have inadequate resources. This aligns with the UN Women's global monitoring report (2018, p. 15) that "across the globe, but particularly in developing countries, schools are grossly under-resourced, teacher training is limited, class sizes are excessive and text-books and other resources are in short supply, with negative consequences for girls and boys alike". Rudo, one of the participants, indicated that scarcity of well-resourced schools was a limitation to education and good schools were located far from her home. She shared, "I was living in remote or economically disadvantaged region and faced difficulties in accessing quality education due to the limited availability of schools, class-rooms, and learning materials". To overcome this problem, Rudo had to stay with her aunt who lived 30 km away from her home because the high school there was well-resourced and affordable. This finding illustrates how limited educational resources hinder access to education in African societies in general and Zimbabwe in particular.

Financial constraints are another major challenge encountered by Zimbabwean females in their quest to get educated. Most parents, especially in rural areas, do not afford good schools, buying text books and uniforms. Rudo, for instance, had to take a gap year in 1997 after grade 7 because her parents did not have money for her to proceed to secondary school. After that, she proceeded, in the midst of those challenges. She remembered, "I was expelled from school many times especially in high school because of school fees". Normally, when faced with such a situation, parents would prioritise educating a boy child because of the mentality that girls are destined for marriage (Kambarami, 2006); therefore, educating a girl would benefit her husband's family more than her own family. To deal with their financial problems, the participants employed different solutions including selling vegetables and fruits to raise school fees, and doing piece jobs to raise money for tuition fees, uniforms and stationery. For instance, one participant, Chiyedza, highlighted, "Because of financial constraints, when I was in secondary school, I ended up helping my mother to sell fruits during school holidays and to even look for

holiday employment in order to be able to afford school fees". This finding reveals that poverty robs children of their childhood because instead of playing with age-mates, they will be working to raise their school fees.

Lack of sanitary wear is one specific challenge faced by girls at school. It is acknowledged in the UN Women's global monitoring report (2018, p. 15) that "where adequate sanitation facilities are lacking, for example, concerns over safety and menstrual hygiene management may keep girls away from school or compromise their learning experience". Rudo was affected by this problem: "specifically for me was lack of sanitary wear when I started my menstrual cycle, and this caused me to miss school and be at home until my cycle was complete. This also had an impact on most of the girls in my class". This shows how serious the problem was, and later on the participant had to improvise: "I used old pieces of cloth or t-shirts as sanitary pads so that I do not miss school when menstruating". However, improvised sanitary napkins are not recommended because they are not hygienic; they expose users to infections (Hennegan et al., 2017). This situation shows that even nature disadvantages girls at school and that the situation is worsened by poverty.

Gender disparity also featured as a common challenge for Zimbabwean females' education. There tends to be a negative mentality amongst some parents, especially fathers, towards educating the girl child, whom they think is destined for marriage (Samkange, 2015). This mentality was reported by two participants, Rudo and Mukai. Rudo explained, "Gender inequalities persist in Zimbabwe, and girls often face greater barriers in accessing education compared to boys". Mukai echoed the same: "My father did not believe that a girl child should go to school". In addition, a girl is expected to do a lot of house chores as elaborated by Rudo who reminisced, "being a girl child, when I got home from school, there was a lot of work to be done, e.g., cooking, gardening, washing, gathering firewood, fetching water, such that there was hardly any time to study after school". It was not easy dealing with such challenges; nevertheless, the participants somehow found their way out. Rudo, for example, found her mother's support motivating and it helped her to be resilient: "My mom was a strong woman and pushed for me and my sister to go to school. … She was my greatest motivator because she would help me with homework and reading".

Social influence emerged as one of the contributing factors to gender inequalities in the area of education. Rudo stated, "There was also pressure from society to influence my father not to send me and my sister to

school because there were a number of girls in the neighbourhood who were ending in Grade 7 and go and work as domestic workers". Society would react negatively to a parent educating a girl child as indicated by Mukai. She recalled, "People laughed at my father asking why he was letting a girl child attend school". This shows that it was a common practice in the participants' societies not to give girls an opportunity to further their studies, and that society would prefer to send boys to school. As a result, there were no role models for the young girls in families and society at large. Fortunately for Rudo, her supporting mother stood by her against the father's resistance, and this helped to circumvent the problem.

The last challenge raised by the participants is that of religions that prohibit females from attending school, for example the Apostolic churches. This deprives girls with parents attending such churches an opportunity to attain education. Mukai faced this hurdle; she recollected, "My mother was mupositori Marange (a Christian denomination) so she had a lot of opposition from church people". This reveals that besides the church beliefs, there was also pressure from church members. To escape the pressure, Mukai opted to attend one of the main line churches that allows education of women.

All the discussed challenges were militating against education attainment by the Zimbabwean women. The participants also gave some advice to other women in Zimbabwe who are facing similar challenges. They encouraged women to work hard, to be committed, to remain focussed and to never give up on their educational dreams. They also advised them to seek help and to be inspired by other women who excelled against all odds. To borrow Chiyedza's words, "I would say, aim at the goal and pursue your dreams. As much as education is expensive to access in Zimbabwe, look for opportunities to raise funds to go to school because the investment in education is what is required now especially for a girl child and for women empowerment".

Employment and Gender Equality Narratives

Employment is one area where Zimbabwean women have experienced challenges. One of the challenges highlighted by some participants is lack of employment opportunities due to economic hardships. Revai, a participant, alluded to this thus, "I struggled to secure a job from the very year I graduated. I only managed to get a 1-month contract at a certain NGO". Failure to secure jobs makes women vulnerable and it puts them in

precarious situations. Unemployment was attributed to participants' lack of working experience. Prior to hiring prospective employees, most employers specify minimum requirements that they expect from prospective employees. For instance, some of the requirements are experience and requisite skills. However, some prospective employees do not meet the stated requirements as stated by a participant called Miriro, "I hold a Bachelor of Accounts degree but when I applied for a job at a certain company, they wanted someone with six years of experience. I did not qualify because I do not have any experience". In order to navigate through this challenge, Miriro mused, "I have now acquired some experience through conducting voluntary work at an orphanage situated in my neighbourhood. I managed to get two years of mentorship and experience which helped me to secure a job early this year". Even though voluntary work does not have material benefits, it offers the necessary grooming and experience needed by employers.

Corruption and nepotism are some of the challenges that impact negatively on women in their endeavour to secure employment in Zimbabwe. Miriro highlighted that some government officials were demanding specific amounts of money from her in exchange of job opportunities and she did not have the money. Nepotism refers the practice of those with power and influence of favouring friends, mostly by giving them jobs and other opportunities. In this regard, nepotism is one of the factors that exacerbate gender inequalities. Hiring through nepotism is now rampant in Zimbabwe and it occurs both in government and non-governmental institutions as alluded to by a participant, Fadzai, "Nowadays in Zimbabwe it is quite difficult to secure employment fairly when you do not have a relative at the organisation or government Ministry. Those who have their relatives at the organisation are the ones who always get the job effortlessly". This finding suggests that nepotism is now a social problem in Zimbabwe since it is widespread in many sectors. Nepotism is detrimental to women's efforts in securing employment. In order to overcome the challenge of rampant nepotism occurring in Zimbabwe, Fadzai pointed out the following, "I am now applying for jobs outside Zimbabwe because my sister applied for a job in Eswatini and got the job after undergoing an interview". The finding suggests that nepotism contributes to brain drain and international migration.

Apart from corruption and nepotism, another challenge facing female prospective employees in Zimbabwe is sexual harassment. Revai succinctly narrated thus, "At times I could experience sexual harassment whereby

recruiters would ask me to get into a relationship with them in exchange of the job". Men's conduct of asking for sexual favours from female prospective employees and subjecting women to sexism illustrates objectification of women by men. These findings corroborate those by Mashiri (2000). Apart from that, sexual harassment violates women's sexual rights and it heightens women's vulnerabilities to rape and sexually transmitted infections. Revai explained that she never bowed to sexual demands because she is a Christian. Instead, she is resorting to prayers and to continue to search for a job with the hope that she will secure one in future without having to compromise her health and dignity.

All married women expressed that the major challenge they faced regarding employment endeavours relates to failure to balance the triple role of women. The triple role of women entails the reproductive, productive and community work roles that women engage in their daily lives. Most women who successfully perform these three roles do so with the help of domestic workers. However, for unemployed women, hiring of domestic workers was not feasible because they could not afford to pay them. For some participants, the triple role was compounded by multifaceted factors. For instance, Fadzai narrated the following sombre experiences, "My left leg is shorter than the right one, hence I struggle to walk while searching for a job. Last year I had to abandon hunting for a job since I had to take care of my husband who got involved in a car accident. I had to abandon looking for a job since my husband's relatives expected me to care for my husband alone, during and after hospitalisation". This finding demonstrates that disabled women not only face mobility issues when searching for employment but they also battle with performing marital duties single-handedly. Kambarami (2006) also found that most relatives in Africa expect wives to spend all their time within the domestic sphere performing house chores. Fadzai eased her burden by requesting her niece to stay with her so that she could assist her with house chores. This finding suggests that the triple role of women hinders gender equalities. Furthermore, this role does not only negatively affect one woman in a given household but it affects other women as well.

Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality Narratives

Some of the gender inequalities are driven by challenges faced by women in their entrepreneurship endeavours. The interviewed participants are engaged in different businesses such as bakery, selling clothes and farming.

While some women do business as their sole source of living, others do it to supplement their salaries.

Some of the participants cited lack of funds as one of the challenges to engage in entrepreneurship initiatives. Tsitsi pondered, "I did not have enough capital to fund the business. I also did not have a place to sell my stuff. This is because renting a shop was very expensive". Lack of funds has a negative impact on efforts to start a business since capital is required to buy stock and to rent a place for selling the goods. Thus, lack of funds hinders gender equality because without capital there will be no entrepreneurship and this constrains and limits women economically and socially. Lack of capital hampers women from achieving a number of sustainable goals. Some of the sustainable development goals cited by the United Nations (2015) include ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and the achievement of gender equality and empower all women and girls. To circumnavigate this challenge, Tsitsi utilised social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook to sell her goods.

Apart from lack of funds, other challenges confronting female entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe are stiff business competition, lack of market and difficult customers. Rutendo, a participant, narrated these concerns, "Life is now too expensive that many people are failing to buy my goods. There are also too many people selling goods that are similar to mine, hence competition is very high". In the same vein, participant Makanyara narrated, "Of the few customers that I have, some of them are too stubborn that they delay and sometimes refuse to pay after taking my stuff on credit". Participants expounded that there are few clients because people do not have money. This finding suggests that the informal sector in Zimbabwe is characterised by challenges which threaten the success of the businesses in this sector. Makanyara was innovative enough to solve the problem of lack of clients through diversifying the products she sells to her clients. Makanyara overcame the challenge of bad debtors by insisting cash payments for all goods bought. Therefore, the challenges confronting entrepreneurs require diversification as well as thinking outside the box and embracing the use of technology.

For female mobile traders, negative labelling by men is one problem they sometimes encounter. Depending on the location of their business, some participants experience negative comments from men as they sell their goods. There are certain areas where women are vulnerable to verbal abuse by men, for example areas dominated by male illegal miners. Mashiri (2000) found in his study that some Shona men, when in public spheres

such as city streets, think that they are licensed to pass stereotyped remarks to female passers-by. Mashiri (2000) states that most remarks are stereotyped in nature and often refer to female sexuality. This behaviour was alluded to by participant Rutendo who operates in Shurugwi mining area. She expounded, "The market is dominated by males; females are usually seen as sex workers whenever you try to genuinely market your products". This kind of behaviour is demeaning and discouraging, and to overcome it, Rutendo said she normally ignores such negative comments and go about her business quietly.

Women entrepreneurs often find it difficult to balance their different responsibilities (e.g. work, business, family). As mentioned earlier, in most African cultures, Zimbabwe included, women are expected to balance their different roles that include motherhood and wifehood (Chabaya et al., 2009; Samkange, 2015), and these roles sometimes hinder business activities, more so to those who are employed. Rutendo, who is into business and also formally employed, explained, "It's difficult to balance time between work, hustling and family. Usually, vending is illegal and selling is prohibited around work spaces". To her, it is even more difficult because she attempts to do both duties at the same time, yet her workplace does not accommodate vending. Chipo, a participant with a family and a full-time entrepreneur, narrated a different experience, "I go to South Africa, Zambia and sometimes Tanzania to order stuff for my business using public transport which is a hustle. Also, I'll be leaving my family responsibilities, my husband, my children behind for a number of days and this is not easy". These experiences demonstrate how difficult it is for married African women to be in entrepreneurship. Rutendo stated that to solve the problems, "I employed a maid to help with some of the house chores. I also partnered with someone who helps with selling our samosas and cream doughnuts, and I go to work early so that I can sell my pies to students as they enter the school gate". Chipo recounted, "To avoid too much travelling, I sometimes use Runners to buy my stuff". Runners are people who buy goods for traders and transport them to their places or countries at a fee.

Besides the narrated challenges, the participants gave some advice to other Zimbabwean women entrepreneurs. They advised fellow women not to rush into business but to take their time preparing. They also advised them to remain focused, to be consistent, to be innovative, to

network and to take risks. For example, Chipo suggested, "I'd advise upcoming women entrepreneurs to come up with new business ideas because the market for this one of buying and selling clothes is now flooded. But when they find a business idea which they believe is viable, they must persevere because it takes time for a business to pick". Makanyara added, "I also advise them to network with other business people to get the trends in the businesses of their choice".

10.5 Conclusion

Gender inequalities are still prevailing in all sectors in Africa, inclusive of Zimbabwe. These inequalities are skewed against women. In Zimbabwe, gender inequalities persist despite efforts put in place such as the Affirmative Action Policy. Our empirical study on narratives of post-colonial experiences by women in Zimbabwe revealed numerous challenges confronting women in their pursuits to improve their lives through education. These challenges illustrated how Zimbabwean women have been and are still affected by national policies, religious and cultural practices which seem to widen gender inequalities. This therefore reverses gains made by the government in the education sector. Challenges such as lack of school fees, text books, stationery, uniforms and sanitary wear point to high poverty levels, particularly in rural areas. However, challenges such as poor school facilities and gender disparities are rooted in lack of political will and patriarchy, respectively.

Challenges restricting Zimbabwean women's entry into the labour market and business sector emanate from corruption, nepotism, gender stereotypes, sexual harassment and the triple role of women. These factors illustrate greed and patriarchal attitudes. Factors such as lack of funds, stiff business competition and lack of market mirror the volatility of the current Zimbabwean economy. Overall, the strategies employed by Zimbabwean women to resolve challenges confronting them in education, employment and entrepreneurship efforts have demonstrated a lot of resilience and determination. The government and the private sector ought to step up efforts in order to redress gender inequalities. Such efforts will simultaneously protect and uphold women's rights to education, economic growth and well-being.

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CHAPTER 11

Shona Women and Rainmaking Rituals in Zimbabwe: Indigenous Women's Ecological Wisdom and Agency

Silindiwe Zvingowanisei and Sophia Chirongoma

11.1 Introduction

Climate change is an existential reality bedevilling Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. For instance, about 80% of the Zimbabwean community depend on agriculture as the backdrop of the economy. Hence, rainmaking rituals, especially in times of drought, are an integral part of the Shona people's lives. They use African Indigenous Knowledge embedded in African religion to pray for rain "by predicting, causing, redirecting and controlling rain within their locality" (Gumo, 2017, p. 386). Rain is seen as the most significant demonstration of the goodness and providence of God (*Mwari*), and whenever it falls, the people

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rejoice, unless it damages crops or causes harmful flooding. In cases of drought, the Shona perform some rituals to ask for rain from *Mwari*. These rainmaking rituals are known by different terms in the different Shona dialects, these include, *Makoto* (Ndau), *Makanzvo* (Manyika), *Mutoro* (Karanga) and *Mukwerera* (Zezuru). Women are central players in these rainmaking rituals. This chapter explores the Shona women's ecological wisdom and agency in rainmaking rituals in Zimbabwe. It discusses some of the religious aspects, that is beliefs and practices guiding the Shona women and how they relate to rain.

Hence, the chapter seeks to contribute to the documentation of Shona women's indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), with a specific focus on the rituals and ceremonies pertaining to rain. It foregrounds the fact that Shona women's indigenous knowledge systems are a reality which calls for academic investigation and which must be reckoned with in modern fields such as agriculture and activities involving humanity's control over its environment. The study also brings to the fore women's agency in adapting to and mitigating the impact of climate change. To ignore the Shona women's indigenous beliefs and practices would jeopardise our understanding of their worldview. This coheres with Mbiti (1969, p. 2), who states that wherever the African is, there is his religion, "he carries it to the fields whether he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop … if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room."

11.2 Background

Western modernity continues to influence indigenous knowledge in Africa many decades after the struggle against colonisation was won. For example, cloud seeding is a technology commonly used for rainmaking. However, those who believe in Western science look down upon indigenous rainmaking practices and rituals. While modern methods of making rain such as cloud seeding have been used to mitigate the impact of climate change, they have, however, achieved nominal successes. Given this scenario, our chapter propounds for a paradigm shift in an endeavour to find solutions to the problem of climate change. It proposes the use of indigenous knowledge systems such as rainmaking rituals to complement Western methods. It posits that indigenous knowledge systems such as rainmaking rituals can be the panacea to the ecological problem which is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, while considerable research has been conducted on the ecological crisis in

Zimbabwe, little attention has been given to the role of women in addressing the same. This chapter, therefore, explores indigenous women's ecological wisdom and agency, focusing on the Shona women's role during the rainmaking ritual. The chapter avers that from time immemorial, the rainmaking ritual has helped to conserve flora and fauna. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) (2007) also affirmed that millions of smallholder farmers or indigenous local communities use their traditional knowledge to ensure food and livelihood security.

11.3 Definition of Key Terms

This section defines and clarifies the key terms used in this chapter.

Ritual

No single definition of the term "ritual" can adequately explain the true meaning of this term and delimit it from what "ritual" is not (Matumbu, 2019). The word "rite" or its Latin translation *ritus* is used as a synonym of "ritual" and is used to refer to a specific religious behaviour or action that is regulated by certain rules (Platvoet, 1996). William Robertson Smith uses words like "ceremony," "sacred acts" and practice of "religion" as supplementary terms for the word "rite" (Stausberg, 2006). Therefore, in this chapter, the rain petitioning ritual will also be referred to as the rain petitioning ceremony.

Rainmaking

Rainmaking is defined as a weather modification ritual that attempts to invoke rain (Ombati, 2017). The most common form of weather modification is cloud seeding to increase rain or snow, usually for the purpose of increasing the local water supply. However, for the purposes of this chapter, the term "rainmaking" is restricted to "the rites which accompany prayers for rain" (Mbiti, 1975, p. 11). This is because in the African anthropological thoughts and mindset, "only God can make or produce rain" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 180). Thus, "making" rain is entirely God's mandate. However, it is the responsibility of men and women to ask God for the rain. This is why in this study we use the word rain "petitioning" because human beings do not "make" rain but they "petition" God for the rain. Human beings cannot and do not make rain, but only God can and

does. It is therefore a misnomer to refer to the ritual as rainmaking. Rather, the appropriate term should be rain "petitioning" or "asking." As such, the term "rain petitioning" is herein used to refer to those traditional practices, rites and rituals which are done to ask God for rain, and "rain petitioners" are the people bestowed with the power to lead those practices.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Scholarship lives by its debates over terminology, and many terms and concepts used in the humanities remain contested (Muyambo, 2016). Scholars have expended considerable energy trying to clarify the concept indigenous knowledge systems. These scholars include *interalia*, Muyambo (2018), Mapangisana Hlatywayo (2017), Mawere (2015), Gudhlanga and Makaudze (2012), Mapara (2009) and Hoppers and Odora (2002). Having analysed the different perspectives on the concept of indigenous knowledge systems, our chapter concurs with the definition offered by Marrewijk (1998, p. 1) which we quote at length:

> *Indigenous knowledge is the sum total of the knowledge and skills which people in a particular geographic area possess, and which enable them to get the most out of their natural environment. Most of this knowledge and these skills have been passed down from earlier generations, but individual men and women in each new generation adapt and add to this body of knowledge in a constant adjustment to changing circumstances and environmental conditions. They in turn pass on the body of knowledge intact to the next generation, in an effort to provide them with survival strategies.*

Ecology

Ecology comes from the Greek *oikos* (house) and *logia* (study of) and it is the study of the relationships among living organisms, including humans, and their physical environment. Ecology considers organisms at the individual, population, community, ecosystem and atmosphere level.

11.4 Theoretical Framework

The chapter utilises the post-colonial theoretical framework. The focus of post-colonial studies is to examine the long-standing impact of cultures in contact with each other and with a particular emphasis on Western

colonial interactions with non-Western countries (Said, 1978). One of its main aims is to uncover local knowledge that may have been side-lined due to the privileging of Western traditions (Muyambo, 2018). Quayson (2002, p. 2) conceptualises the post-colonial theory as a theory that "involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies as well as the level of more general global developments thought to be the after effects of empire." In other words, the post-colonial theory is a means of defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged (Rukundwa & van Aarde, 2007). The post-colonial theory is increasingly being used in fields such as management studies (Frenkel, 2008). Frenkel (2008), for example, posits that the transfer of knowledge has been done by multinational companies, using a Western model as the benchmark. This was done at the expense of local knowledge, which was denigrated and marginalised by the colonisers. The post-colonial theory focuses largely on how the literature by the colonisers distorts the experiences and realities of the colonised and inscribes the inferiority of the colonised while at the same time promoting the superiority of the coloniser (Mapara, 2009). On the other hand, the post-colonial theory is also about the colonised and formerly colonised announcing their presence and identity as well as reclaiming their past that was lost or distorted because of being ordered by colonialism.

Peering through the lenses of the post-colonial theory, this chapter centres IKS which have been marginalised by the Western model of knowledge transfer and consummation. Ashcroft et al. (2002) observe that post-colonial perspectives are increasingly becoming relevant in today's world considering the rapid growth and development of the quest for sustainable knowledge. This is supported by Mapara (2009, p. 143) who notes that IKS as a post-colonial theory "attempts to put the record straight on several issues." The post-colonial theory sheds light on "cultures and contexts that cannot be explained by European theories because European theories operate on the false assumption of the universal" (Muyambo, 2018, p. 81). The post-colonial theory offers insights into unearthing the effects of colonialism (Ashcroft et al., 2002). The theory aims to bring new perspectives where African IKS, particularly Shona women's rain petitioning rituals, are also prioritised and acknowledged as alternative forms of knowledge. By taking this approach, the efficacy of IKS in addressing existential problems is examined. Gazing through the post-colonial theoretical lens, the study uncovers the ways in which the

former colonisers maintained and perpetuated an ideology of dominance and superiority over African IKS. An interrogation of this nature paves the way for an inclusive acceptance of knowledge—the Western as well as the non-Western knowledge(s). Apart from reclaiming, reaffirming, and revaluing IKS, the post-colonial theory "provides for Western epistemologies and non-Western ones to complement each other on an equal footing" (Muyambo, 2018, p. 82). It restates that no form of knowledge is more important than the other. Hence, the post-colonial theory appeals to us as the ideal theoretical paradigm for investigating the Shona women's indigenous ecological wisdom and agency pertaining to rain petitioning rituals.

11.5 Methodology

The chapter uses the qualitative research enquiry and the rationale for adopting it is that the research investigates the peoples' experiences, the conceptions and descriptions of the Shona women's beliefs and practices in relation to rainmaking rituals. Merriam (2002) notes that the qualitative research approach finds out how people in different contexts behave, feel, think and express themselves in response to given contexts. The qualitative research method uses the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection. Accordingly, data for this chapter was collected through interviews from purposively sampled Shona women in Zimbabwe. The qualitative methods afforded the researchers the opportunity to interact with the research participants and got accurate information. Merriam (2009) avers that reality is constructed by the individual interacting with their social worlds. This means that the qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning constructed by the people about their world and how they make sense out of their experiences. Our interest in this study is to find the meanings and significance of the Shona women's beliefs and practices in the context of rain petitioning rituals.

Phenomenology is a descriptive theory of knowledge which emphasises describing the real appearance of things as they are. In this context, the phenomena which we described are the Shona women's rain petitioning beliefs and practices as they are exactly presented without any assumptions or presuppositions. Chitando (1998) argues that the purpose of phenomenology is to describe the phenomena and to attain an understanding of that which is manifested. The study also tags into the other insights from the phenomenological method such as *epoche* and empathy (Cox, 1992). This method is appropriate for this study as it helps in comprehending

lived experiences. Phenomenology encourages researchers to bracket or hold back all value judgements and premature decisions from flowing into the research as this might distort the meaning of the phenomena (Matumbu, 2019). This is called performing *epoche* which means putting all of one's assumptions and preconceived ideas about the object into abeyance (Cox, 1992). Bracketing is a way of encouraging scholars to refrain from evaluating religious traditions (Chitando, 2005). The phenomenological method strives for accurate and appropriate interpretation of religious phenomena from the perspectives of the practitioners. This involves as far as possible maintaining a descriptive outlook in gathering, sifting, and analysing data. In this study, we describe the values, beliefs and practices of the Shona women from their own perspective and their ecological wisdom and agency in rain petitioning rituals.

11.6 Situational Analysis

The climate change crisis is a global phenomenon, and the African continent is feeling the brunt of burden. This has necessitated the adoption of various strategies to combat the effects of climate change in Africa. As noted by Gumo (2017), in many African rural societies, the elders hold seemingly mystical powers of weather forecasting. These are called rainmakers in some societies because they are believed to be able not only to foretell when the rains may come but they can make it happen. Significant aspects of these practices are the rainmaking rituals to combat climate changes that cause droughts, hunger, disease and poverty. Water has always symbolised life and its shortage has been a cause of concern among communities across the globe. It is against this backdrop that the rainmaking ceremony has been practised by communities to achieve abundant rains. What follows is a brief review of literature related to rainmaking in Africa.

11.7 Rainmaking Rituals in Africa: Literature Review

A considerable amount of literature has been written on the rainmaking rituals in Africa. However, there is limited research on the role of women in these rituals. In Zimbabwe, most of the research has been focusing on men's perspective, little has been done to show women's contribution to

combat the effects of climate change, particularly through performing the rainmaking ritual. It is this gap that this chapter seeks to cover.

Prins (1990) observed rock art including paintings, which reflect notions of shamanistic nature, associated with trance, among the Southern-Bushman San of the Transkei region of South Africa. The descendants of the San lived in rock shelters and visited caves situated adjacent to rivers to conduct rainmaking rituals. They were regarded as highly knowledgeable experts on the art and science of rainmaking particularly in the prevention of bad rain, such as lightning. They entered into a trance and made rain in the invincible realm. The San were summoned to come and pray for rain during droughts. During the rainmaking ritual, the rainmaker disappeared into isolation to the rock shelters in secret and entered into a trance, sometimes described as a dream or vision, and on return, rains would fall. The San are still believed to have the power to make rain in contemporary South Africa. The rainmaking ritual involves placing a San individual into a river, the individual would sweat profusely while seated on a reed mat (reeds are water plants), then it will rain thereafter (Prins, 1990).

Haruna (1997) focused on the most important aspects, beliefs and practices that are observed during the rainmaking ritual among the Bubbare and the SU Guruntum people of Nigeria. The livelihoods of both groups of people depend on rain since they are farmers. Rain is viewed as the most significant demonstration of the providence and goodness of God and whenever it rains, the people rejoice. A spiritual leader (chief priest) leads the rainmaking ritual. The chief priest is respected in the community and is knowledgeable about the local climatic conditions. The rainmaking rituals are conducted in special spaces and locations, and under special trees which are regarded as "sacred abodes of the spirits" (Haruna, 1997, p. 230). This is meant to ensure effective responses. During the ritual prayers, the priests and the people carry different types of foods, put on rags and sackcloth, and cover themselves with ashes (a sign of repentance), blow horns, beat drums, calabashes and empty tins.

Haruna (1997, p. 230) states that lack of rain is normally associated with sin, and thus, the high priest urges the people to "purge themselves of any known sin(s), committed against one another, their ancestors, nature, the environment and God." The prayers of repentance and supplication are effected by people considered to be pure. For example, only married women, without exception, participate in the rainmaking ritual, while unmarried women and prostitutes are excluded. The exclusion of unmarried women and prostitutes corresponds to the act of purification

(Haruna, 1997). At the end of the ritual prayers, the spiritual leader and the rest of the people share all the food with one another, and they leave some at the site for the ancestors. They do not sacrifice animals. According to Haruna (1997, p. 232), "God answers their prayer and rain begins to fall immediately, and when there is too much rain, it is the high priest who stops it."

Byaruhanga (1982) researched on the Bunyoro kingdom in Uganda and provides an account of the Nyoro traditions on those people who are believed to control the weather pertaining to having or not having rain, through power given them by the divinities. The Nyoro rainmakers can be either men or women, and they mostly originate from one specific genealogical lineage or clan. However, they have to go through training before assuming the rainmaking duties. Only women of character and social quality and grace are allowed to be rainmakers (Byaruhanga, 1982).

The community approaches the rainmakers when there is a drought threatening people's and animal's survival. The rainmakers are also believed to be able to stop rain, for example on a wedding day or for some other function when people do not want rain. After receiving the request for rain, the rainmakers prepare for the day of the rainmaking ceremony by gathering the required implements and then demand to be paid for their services. On the rainmaking day, the rainmakers clear a section of the bush or forest, which they use as the shrine for sacrifice. At the end of the ritual, after the rainmakers have prayed for rain, the people return home to wait for the rain and they "get rain before they reach their homes" (Byaruhanga, 1982, p. 78).

Matsuhira (2013) gives an account from the perspective of a participant observer on the preparation, process, procedure, participants, implements and tools of a rainmaking ceremony in the Nyandoro Region in Zimbabwe. A significant observation on this rainmaking ritual is the centrality and power of gender and virginity in consummating the ritual by involving both the ancestral spirits and the divinity, by way of bodily purity. Another observation is that the rainmaking ceremony is not only a preparation for the farming season, but also the opportunity to discuss clan politics (Matsuhira, 2013). The rainmaking ritual is, therefore, an important and still surviving traditional system of social, political, religious and economic organisation of the Shona people of Nyandoro Region in Zimbabwe.

Ombati (2017) writes on the Nganyi rainmakers of Bunyore, a subtribe of the Luhya community of Western Kenya. The Nganyi rainmakers are well-known for weather forecasting using indigenous knowledge that

by observing "subtle changes in nature and making interpretations on plant responses, animal behaviors, and on aches in their bodies, they are able to predict with high precision and accuracy the local weather, particularly the timing and intensity of rains and drought" (Ombati, 2017, p. 89). The Nganyi rainmakers have perfected the science of rainmaking that they have long used in advising local communities about when and what to plant, based on weather patterns.

Akong'a (1987) and Korster (2011) researched on the rainmaking dance among the Akamba community of Kenya. They agree that the Akamba rainmaking ritual, known as *Kilumi* dance in their language, was a public event led by rainmakers or prophets who were believed to have the power to predict or redirect rainfall. According to Korster (2011, p. 173), "drought in particular forced community members to pull out the *Kilumi* dance to invoke the blessings of water spirits and deities." The Akamba people believed that invisible rainmaking ancestral spirits participated in the *Kilumi* dances. The people who took part in the *Kilumi* dances were, therefore, expected to make excellent performances to impress the ancestral spirits. Both Akong'a (1987) and Korster (2011) indicate that *Kilumi* dances were also accompanied by the pouring of libations and offering of sacrifices to appease the spirits. This is because droughts were considered as curses for wrongdoing. Successful *Kilumi* dances ended with celebrations as the people looked forward to a favourable response (getting rainfall from the spirits). After these festivity rainmaking rituals, it never failed to rain (Akong'a, 1987; Korster, 2011). Having provided a brief literature review, the ensuing section focuses on the Shona women's ecological wisdom and agency in the rain petitioning ritual in Zimbabwe.

11.8 Shona Women's Ecological Wisdom and Agency in Rain Petition Rituals

From the point of view of men as the official guardians of the land and lineage (Schoffeleers, 1978), women are rendered unimportant in the religious heritage of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Despite the roles they fulfil in the Shona indigenous religion, for example, as indigenous midwives (*Mbuya Nyamukuta*), spirit mediums (*svikiro*), diviners (*vauki*) and indigenous healers (*n'anga*), women are perceived as inferior to men. This is reflected in literature produced by anthropologists who have drawn

their conclusions about the Shona from observations made at rituals held in honour of the patrilineal ancestors. For instance, Bourdillon (1976) states that there is a male focus in Shona indigenous religion. Additionally, the *Mwari* cult of indigenous Zimbabwe has commonly been interpreted as describing a God of the patriarchal family and ancestry (Mukonyora, 1999). This chapter, however, highlights the Shona women's ecological wisdom and agency in the rain petitioning ritual in Zimbabwe.

Among the Shona, the rain petitioning ritual is known by different names among the different ethnic groups. It is called *makoto* (Ndau), *mutoro* (Karanga), *makanzvo* (Manyika), *mukwerera* (Zezuru) and *Umtolo* (Ndebele). Mupepereki (2016) defines *mukwerera* as a community-based rainfall ritual conducted annually. Although there are variations in the way the rain petitioning ritual is conducted, women play significant roles in the rituals. The rain petitioning ritual is held when the land is threatened with drought. It is held at the beginning of the rainy season in early September. The local chief, in consultation with the local *mhondoro* (spirit medium), coordinates the ceremony because both represent the spirits who are the owners of the land. Among the Shona, both men and women can be spirit mediums (*mhondoro/svikiro*). Thus, women are also believed to have the power to ask for rain from the ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*).

The first step in the rain petitioning ritual is the collection of the inputs to brew the beer ahead of the ceremony. The village headman (*sabhuku*) liaises with the village elders to mobilise input for the preparation of the indigenous beer used for the libation ceremony. Such inputs include millet (*zviyo, rukweza, mungoza*) or sorghum (*mapfunde*). According to Mupepereki (2016), grains, usually finger millet/rapoko (*rukweza*), sorghum and pearl millet (*mhunga*), are collected as contributions from each family. Women are responsible for growing these small grain crops. While these small grain crops have been part of the Shona people's agricultural produce since time immemorial, they are now grown at a small scale due to colonisation, which introduced cash crops; hence, most people now prefer to grow cash crops such as maize. However, some Shona women are reverting to growing these drought-resistant small grain crops to address the problem of cash crop failure caused by erratic weather patterns due to climate change. As one woman puts it:

> *Tave kurima chikafu chakaita sezviyo, mhunga, nemapfunde nokuda kwemamiriro ekunze, sezvo zvisingadi mvura yakawanda* (We are now growing

> small grain crops such as rapoko; pearl; millet and sorghum which are drought resistant). (Mrs B interview, 2023)

In the second step after the collection of the inputs, beer is brewed over a seven-day period. Some "ritually clean" elderly women are responsible for brewing the beer ahead of the rain petitioning ritual. One female *mhondoro* (spirit medium) explained that:

> *'Ritually clean' women are either menopausal women or pre-puberty girls. This is because the Shona regard blood as unclean. The belief is that if "unclean" women brew the beer for the rain petitioning ritual, it will be defiled and, therefore, the ancestors will not accept it, resulting in no rain at all.* (Mrs C interview, 2023)

The Shona do not regard post-menopausal women as unclean and just like celibate women, they can therefore brew the beer for the rain petitioning ritual. Similar findings were revealed by Ndlovu (2008, p. 114) in a study among the Zulu Kingdom. He says:

> *Post-menopausal women in Zulu Kingdom were no longer regarded as unclean and thus they could function as a distinct and powerful kind of woman. They were more like a bridge that connected the female and male domains since they could easily move between the female and male domains.*

Young girls who have not reached puberty are allowed to help the menopausal women in brewing the beer. They help with tasks such as fetching water and passing the utensils such as stirring sticks (*mugoti*) and cups to the post-menopausal women. It is taboo for persons who are sexually active, women of childbearing age, as well as women going through the menstrual cycle to handle the utensils or otherwise participate actively in the *mukwerera* preparations. Makuvaza (2008) revealed similar findings about menopausal women when he notes that during rainmaking ceremonies at the Mwari cult in Zimbabwe, only pre-adolescents and post-menopausal women carry beer pots to Njelele, in a bid to maintain the shrine's purity and not permit defilement by married women who still experience menstrual periods.

Babane and Chauke (2015) also refer to elderly women in their study. They provide insights on unique ways of managing drought amongst the Vatonga ethnic group within Limpopo Province of South Africa. This

group of Xitsonga speakers is also found in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Swaziland where they are interchangeably called Machangana, Shangani or Shangaans. Babane and Chauke (2015) indicate that during drought seasons, ancestral worship by members of the royal family was performed by elderly women, together with selected members in rainmaking rituals called *nkelekele*.

Besides brewing beer for the rain petitioning ritual, Shona women are also responsible for moulding the clay pots in which the beer is brewed. They mould the pots using different types and colours of clay. These big clay pots are called *pfuko* or *makate* in Shona. Women also use the big clay pots to brew traditional sweet beer (*maheu*), a non-alcoholic drink which is drunk by women and children.

The rain petitioning ritual takes place four days after the beer has been brewed. On the day of the rain petitioning ritual, people gather to witness the ritual. The rain petitioning ritual is performed utilising several sacred objects regarded as holy abodes of the spirits and the Mwari Supreme Deity. These include the *muhacha/muchakata* (hissing) sacred tree, hills and mountains. The post-menopausal women carry the beer pots to the location of the rainmaking ritual. The chief offers some prayers to the ancestral spirits petitioning for rain. After that, the women pour some of the beer on the ground as libation to the ancestral spirits. This is followed by *mhururu* (ululation) from the women (Kileff & Kileff, 1970).

The Shona regard certain trees as sacred, for instance, *muhacha/muchakata* (hissing) tree. Mahohoma (2020) notes that in Shona spirituality, there are certain trees associated with the presence of ancestors. People usually hold rituals (*bira*) under such sacred trees. The Shona believe that all big trees belong to their ancestors (*vadzimu*). According to Daneel (2001, p. 92), "virtually all large trees (*miti mikuru*) were protected as they belonged to the ancestors who were believed to dwell in these branches. One such tree is the *muchakata/muhacha* tree." Similarly, Mahohoma (2020, p. 12) writes:

> *Among the Karanga, people usually gather around certain trees for spiritual exercises. Such trees include mushavhi and muonde (fig tree) that are believed to afford worshippers a mystical experience of God and ancestors. Rainmaking rituals (mutoro/mukwerera) for instance, are held below a muchakata/muhacha tree. As a result, such trees are vital for the livelihood of the community because of their religious significance.*

Because of its sacredness, the Shona are strictly forbidden from cutting the *muhacha* tree. After performing the ritual under the *muhacha* tree, the people return to the chief's homestead. At the chief's residence, the people celebrate as they feast and drink the remaining beer. Women sing and dance and ululate into the night. Even when the chief went to sleep, "we would still dance and sing around his house" (Mbuya N, interview, 2023). Meanwhile, men sat together and drank beer. Another elderly woman put it across as follows:

> *mvura yaibva yanaya husiku ihwohwo kana vanhu vasati vasvika kudzimba dzavo* (It would rain that night or before people reached their homes from the chief's residence. (Mbuya H, interview, 2023)

Older women are also responsible for passing on the teaching to the younger generations about the importance of observing restrictions on cutting down several sacred trees for firewood. The passing on of such teaching contributes towards ecological preservation.

11.9 Conclusion

Our chapter foregrounds Shona women's ecological wisdom and agency in the rain petitioning (*mukwerera*) ritual. Drawing insights from the post-colonial theoretical framework, the chapter refutes the widely held view that pre-colonial societies in Africa, including the Shona, were steeped in the patriarchy order, diminishing women, and consigning them to the domestic sphere. Hence, our chapter restates the fact that Shona women have not been steeped in domesticity, but they actively participate in the public domain, particularly in the rain petitioning (*mukwerera*) ritual. Given the pivotal role that women play in the rain petitioning ritual as well as serving as reservoirs of IKS, which is integral towards curbing the debilitating effects of climate change, the chapter calls for the inclusion of indigenous women in climate change interventions and initiatives.

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CHAPTER 12

UNongqawuse ngase mlanjeni: Re-imagining a Young *ingqirhakazi* and a Human Being

Nobuntu Penxa-Matholeni

12.1 Introduction and Background

Nongqawuse is one of the most controversial figures in the rich history of the amaXhosa people. However, her portrayal in historical accounts has not been favourable. Her story is primarily transmitted through two channels: the colonial records and the oral traditions passed down through generations among the amaXhosa people. She is known as a false prophetess, who is associated with a cattle-killing incident, which some describe as a genocide or a national suicide, among other distressing terms. Consequently, divergent interpretations of Nongqawuse have emerged, with some regarding her as a symbol of deception, and others as a symbol of destruction. There are scholars who sympathise with her,

Nongqawuse by the river.
Diviner.

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presenting her as a liberator. Across various disciplines and genres, she is depicted as both an enigmatic figure and a powerful symbol. Her name and her story have not only inspired lyrics of songs or poems but have also been transformed into a theatrical production. However, amidst these varied representations, her personhood occupies very little narrative space.

The first part of the title reads: "*uNongqawuse ngase mlanjeni*" (Nongqawuse by the river). The rationale behind this introduction is threefold: firstly, as an umXhosa young woman, Nongqawuse would have been intimately acquainted with fetching water *emlanjeni*; secondly, historical records indicate that she accompanied her cousin to chase away birds on her uncle's field near the Gxarha river; and thirdly, *emlanjeni* is a very important space in the lives of Black people, particularly Black women. The concept of "*emlanjeni*" will be substantially unpacked later in this text.

This chapter employs the indigenous storytelling methodology to answer the following question: "To what extent was Nongqawuse's little-known personhood beyond her time?" The significance of this methodology will be briefly explained and unpacked, shedding light on its unique characteristics and relevance for this study. Furthermore, the chapter will elucidate the position of the author and Nongqawuse. The rationale behind this approach is rooted in the profound impact of communal values on storytelling within Black communities. In such contexts, where individuals are inherently interconnected with their communities, this shared perspective significantly shapes the narrative process. Coming from a background where the individual is intricately intertwined with the collective, one's storytelling is inevitably influenced by this communal ethos, resulting in a distinct and nuanced portrayal of the story being told. Subsequently, the chapter will examine the dominant narrative, the single story—that is, what we know about Nongqawuse. However, the focus will shift towards the alternative story, a re-imagining of Nongqawuse as a young woman and placing her *emlanjeni*. This alternative story will emphasise her remarkable qualities of strength, courage, and fearlessness. Finally, the chapter will paint a vivid portrait of Nongqawuse as a woman imbued with inner strength, capturing the essence of her character and experiences beyond the surface-level accounts of her life.

12.2 Methodology

The chosen methodology for this study is indigenous storytelling, as it aligns with the principles outlined by Bagele Chilisa (Chilisa, 2012). In this context, the term "indigenous" pertains to the unique ways in which a cultural group perceives reality, acquires knowledge, and incorporates value systems into the research process. By employing indigenous storytelling as the methodological framework, this study aims to acknowledge the cultural perspectives and epistemologies that inform the exploration of Nongqawuse's narrative. The above definition gives rise to several questions, such as: How would those colonised "others" define their reality? How can these realities be studied?

Moreover, indigenous research diverges from the practice of relying solely on existing Western theories to define and identify research issues. Instead, it centres on the unique local experiences, ensuring that the research is grounded in the specific cultural context under study. Additionally, an indigenous methodology is sensitive to local contexts and creates locally relevant designs, methods, and theories that are relevant to the specific community and derived from local experiences and indigenous knowledges.

In this study, I draw upon a method of indigenous storytelling that I previously utilised in the context of pastoral care and counselling (Penxa-Matholeni, 2022a). I emphasise the significance of stories in the lives of Black Africans. In adopting an indigenous storytelling methodology, it is essential to encompass a diverse range of narrative forms. This methodology should serve as an umbrella term, encompassing various storytelling modalities such as *ingoma* (songs), *umxhentso* (dance), *iintsomi* (folktales, *inganekwane* in isiZulu), *eziko* (stories that are told by the fire), *ukubetha izandla* (clapping of hands), the names of Black Africans, and the names of places, proverbs, and metaphors. These stories serve as a means to collect, deposit, analyse, store, and disseminate information. They act as a powerful tool for socialisation, facilitating the transmission of cultural knowledge, values, and customs within a community. Bagele Chilisa (2012) concedes that indigenous languages and oral literature provide some of the missing chapters on the stories and experiences of indigenous peoples. Likewise, this chapter seeks to provide some of those missing chapters in Nongqawuse's life, by re-imagining her. This is not an endeavour to advance fragmentation but an acknowledgement of diverse cultures and contexts.

12.3 Self-location

I am proudly identifying as the descendant of courageous warrior men and women who fought under the leadership of figures like Hintsa and Sekhukhune. They hail from a lineage of patriots who stood alongside Cetshwayo and Mphephu in battle and were instilled with the teachings of honourable soldiers like Moshoeshoe and Ngungunyane, who emphasised the preservation of freedom and the importance of upholding noble causes. This ancestral heritage forms an integral part of my identity and serves as a constant reminder of the legacy of bravery and dedication that has been passed down through generations. My mind and my knowledge of myself are formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandhlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert. Being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that I am an African. Today it feels good to be an African.

Nongqawuse stands as one of the warriors mentioned above, and I am proudly declaring myself as her grandchild. My very being is formed by the profound story of Nongqawuse, as her story intertwines with our shared identity, particularly within the amaXhosa community. We are inextricably linked to her as a fellow human being, and her story resonates deeply within us. We bear the weight of her failures and share in her gifts. As a prophetess and *ingqirhakazi* (diviner), she belongs to us, serving as a unifying force that connects us all.

According to Bagele Chilisa (2020), the significance of "self-praise or identity stories" holds a cherished place within African cultures, where they are shared and passed down. The above tells the self-story concerning the individual's history and family tree, which are valued attributes of the family lineage. Additionally, such praises take the form of oral historical recitations of one's family which are passed from generation to generation and whose knowledge is highly valued and treated as a signifier of one's identity (Letseka, 2012). This is congruent with indigenous storytelling methodologies.

I am consequently locating myself concerning this text. I am connected to the text as an umXhosa woman who was born and raised in the province of the Eastern Cape where the story in question began. This is the world from where I will be interpreting this text (Penxa-Matholeni, 2022b).

12.4 Single Story: Nongqawuse "Prophetess of Doom"

As a young umXhosakazi and *ingqirhakazi*, her story was orally told and retold in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because of the oral tradition of Black Africans, I can safely say that the early written literature was not written by the owners of the story—the amaXhosa people. By that, I mean our story—the story of the amaXhosa people—was not authored by the owners of the story. Instead, our narrative was recounted and documented by others who assumed authority over it, often lacking a deep understanding of the nuances of our language and body language. Nevertheless, our story was preserved and continued to be shared.

While it is crucial to avoid fixating solely on the distorted single story of Nongqawuse, it is worth noting two significant observations that emerged from her narrative. Firstly, it highlights certain hypocrisies within amaXhosa traditions. Secondly, it sheds light on the exploitation of the so-called genocide by white colonial masters. However, it is important to transition to an alternative story. In this context, Nongqawuse is portrayed as a young woman who, in 1856, felt a calling to be the bearer of a message from the ancestors. It is important to recognise that in written literature, she has been described as a young woman, teenager, or even a girl, just to name a few (Dhlomo, 1935; Peires, 1989). In this text, however, she is a young woman, who had a calling to be *ingqirhakazi*.

The Double Standard of AmaXhosa People

Nongqawuse, a young woman, and her cousin, were expected like any other young people to perform specific chores. When this incident happened, they were coming in from frightening the birds off her uncle's field (Dhlomo, 1935; Peires, 1989). The above situation can be interpreted from various perspectives. Firstly, their task of startling the birds in her uncle's field indicates that, despite her divine gift, Nongqawuse was still seen as a young woman with regular responsibilities. She was expected to contribute to household chores such as fetching water and gathering firewood, reflecting her stage of adolescence. The nurturing of her transition into adulthood was not solely the responsibility of her uncle, uMhlakaza, but also the entire community. In Black African culture, children are raised not just within their immediate household by their parents, but by the

community. The concept of communality and collective solidarity in African society is eloquently expressed by Louw (2015). According to Louw, this remarkable and tangible dimension of African spirituality is deeply ingrained in all spheres of life. There is a profound sense of interdependence from the extended family to the entire community. Everybody is interrelated, including relations between the living and those who have departed. That commonality, interdependence, and connectedness stretch from birth to death. In other words, we are connected in health, death, blessings, and in curses. Most African philosophers concur that a noteworthy element of Ubuntu entangles in a communal and traditional lifestyle, therefore everyone is their neighbour's keeper. Murove (2014) asserts that if we are indeed each other's keeper, we can deduce that people can only be responsible within the context of relationships with others. Murove further states that not many of us will ever be completely self-sufficient and all-sufficient.

During Nongqawuse's era, the sense of community and interconnectedness was indeed stronger than it is in the present-day context. Considering this, one might question why the young *ingqirhakazi* or seer is seemingly shouldering the sole responsibility for the infamous genocide. Did she alone fail? Or did the whole community fail?

In an attempt to answer the above questions, I reflect on the celebrated novel by A.C. Jordan (1940), *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*.[1] Similar incidents happened concerning a snake, which is called *Majola*, one of the clan names of amaMpondomise.[2] *Majola* is the animal of the royal house of amaMpondomise. The modern king's wife Nobantu discovered a snake lying next to her baby boy, and she killed the *Majola*. According to amaMpondomise, *Majola* came to visit the future king, which is her baby boy. Nobantu, the mother of the child, disrespected their ancestors and their customs. Imbizo[3] was called, and the king asked the senior councillor in the amaMpondomise kingdom, uNgxabane,[4] to lead the way forward. The old man said: "*isizwe samaMpondomise sifile, ndiza kuthetha xa ndingubani, xa ndisindephi? Nam ndibhubhile njengomntu wonke* (I cannot speak because I am also dead with the nation)".[5]

[1] The wrath of ancestors.
[2] One of the clans that have royal blood in them.
[3] Gathering of the royal.
[4] One of the respected senior councillors of amaMpondomise.
[5] The nation of amaMpondomise is dead, and so am I. How am I to speak when I am dead?

The death of amaMpondomise can be seen as both figurative and metaphorical. The incident killed the nation; therefore, they are responsible as much as Nobantu, the modern king's wife.

How then is the incident concerning Nongqawuse, a young woman, her fault, and hers alone? It is difficult to believe that a young woman outdid the entire nation with her destructive powers. She alone killed a nation in a male-dominated society; if that is the case, then *akanantanga* (she has no match). In perspective, she is the victim of the amaXhosa double standard. This double standard is seen in the interpretation of the fall in the book of Genesis, with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Claassens, 2023). Should uMhlakaza, Nongqawuse's uncle, also take some responsibility? After all, he was the interpreter and organiser of her visions, who immediately distributed the so-called message of doom (Peires, 1989) Would he do that if he did not trust Nongqawuse's prophecy? Why then is she singled out as a prophetess of doom? Where is her mentor? Her gift was recognised and respected; one cannot hold that position without a mentor, especially because she was still a young woman with a powerful gift.

The Incident Was Exploited by Colonial Masters

Mphande (1991) emphasises that the person who took immediate advantage of this tragedy was George Grey, Governor, and British High Commissioner to South Africa, who resides in the former Ciskei. He quickly "banished" the starving, squeezed survivors, and grabbed more than half of amaXhosa land for a colony of white colonists.

Peires (1989), in his book *Dead Will Arise*, claimed that the people seen by Nongqawuse never existed. He continued to insult Nongqawuse by saying that all was in her mind, and he described Nongqawuse as deranged. Peires further stated that Nongqawuse was an orphan raised by an uncle who was himself a religious visionary. Both of those statements are problematic when viewed through indigenous lenses. Those statements further expose Peires' ignorance of amaXhosa communal ontology. Nongqawuse, as an umXhosa young woman, can never feel like a motherless child. Nongqawuse had *umalume* (brother of her mother),[6] that alone is a testament to the fact that the community never saw her as an orphan. *Umalume* was/is her parent—full stop; there was no adopting or

[6] Her mother's brother.

fostering. This young woman was raised, not in an individualistic society, but in a fundamentally communal community. Therefore, she was a child of that village. Peires' book is a typical example of a single story told and interpreted by an outsider (Peires 1989). This confirms what Maluleke (2019) alludes to when he says, we had no control over what was said about us or done to us for a very long time. Dube's laments put Maluleke's assertion into perspective when she says:

> *I came to realize the sad implications of reading and living with or by stories written for me and not by me. This is a crucial issue, given that oral sub-Saharan black African people who live in the age of the information superhighway, do not own the means of producing and disseminating information about themselves. Most of what we read about ourselves, and other subjects is not written or published by us.* (Dube, 2000, p. 8)

That creates a single, unfinished story.

12.5 Alternative Story: Re-imagining a Young Woman

Imagination provides us with the freedom to create alternative stories, rethinking unquestioned histories so widely and easily assumed to be "true". In this section, I engage my subjectivity and closely examine the limited surviving traces of Nongqawuse's story. By diverging from established histories, I aim to scrutinise the underlying assumptions that shape their construction (White, 1978). The following are points of my imagination of uNongqawuse:

As a Young Ingqirhakazi, and a Talented Stick Fighter

Nongqawuse, as any umXhosa girl child, was familiar with games and sports played by both boys and girls. The sport that comes to mind is *ukubetha iintonga* (stick fighting), an amaXhosa boys' sport. The rationale behind this assertion is that in the literature that was consulted, there is no mention of male siblings or cousins of Nongqawuse. It is just her, her uncle, and her cousin's sister Nonkosi. Therefore, she must have been doing both girls' and boys' chores at home.

In my perspective, when a Black girl finds herself in such a position, it is customary for her to shoulder those chores as expected. One of the

chores traditionally assigned to boys is *ukolusa* (attending to the cattle). Stick fighting often occurs during this duty. While engaged in tending to the cattle, she developed the skill to participate in this sport, demonstrating her ability to embrace activities typically associated with boys in her community (Mandela, 1994). Indispensable knowledge to any rural umXhosa boy is the mastery of various techniques in stick fighting. This includes parrying blows, feinting in one direction, and striking in another. Additionally, acquiring quick footwork enables them to effectively break away from opponents during the game (Penxa-Matholeni, 2020). Part of communing with boys is to learn what they are doing while tending the flock. Nongqawuse learnt this very mechanical skill. It is noteworthy to mention that stick fighting is an ancient African art of profound cultural significance; furthermore, a boy who masters this sport earns a lot of respect. On the issue of boys receiving automatic respect solely for mastering this sport, one can only contemplate whether she, as a girl child who mastered the skill, also earned the same automatic respect.

As a Young Woman, Who Is Well-known for Possessing a Prophetic Calling

It must have been a challenge to be a girl child and a messenger of the ancestors (Bradford & Msokoli, 2008; Bradford, 2016). Nevertheless, she skilfully mastered the art of playing stick fighting. Once again, the literature remains silent or insufficiently explains the level of respect she received as an *ingqirhakazi*. It is left to our imagination to envision the respect she garnered based on the limited information available. Mhlakaza, an elderly man, served as her interpreter and organiser of her prophecies, which would have gained her respect. With grace and inner strength, she carried her divine calling, alongside the reverence that accompanied it, while simultaneously excelling in the art of stick fighting.

As a Young Woman Who Partakes in Rituals Performed Emlanjeni

Emlanjeni is one of those amaXhosa spaces where rituals are performed. For instance, *iinkosi zamaXhosa* (Chief of amaXhosa) use to be buried *emlanjeni*. The boys and girls also go wash *emlanjeni* at the end of their initiation periods, that is *ulwaluko* for boys and *kwaNtonjane* for girls (Penxa-Matholeni, 2020). It is a space where the girls fetch water and

meet their boyfriends. As a girl, Nongqawuse was familiar with going to and from *emlanjeni* for water and spiritual ceremonial reasons. She and her cousin Nonkosi would engage in discussions about boys and other matters that were commonly conversed among girls during her era. As *ingqirhakazi*, Nonkosi was the best person for her to talk about her challenging responsibility to the nation and the ancestors. According to Peires (1989), Nonkosi could hear Nongqawuse talking to the people/ancestors but could not see them. Nongqawuse was familiar with manoeuvring Nonkosi's questions about what she is experiencing and being a teenage girl that Nonkosi can talk to about being a young woman.

During the rituals conducted at *emlanjeni*, Nongqawuse and Nonkosi would adorn themselves in traditional garments. With a profound sense of pride, they actively took part in traditional dances, joining other young women in graceful movements. They would adorn themselves with *inciyo* (snake totems) fashioned into miniskirts, while being topless and embellishing their necks with vibrant-coloured beads. This practice is an essential aspect of a culture that celebrates the beauty of its artistic heritage, where bare breasts and traditional costumes are not seen as symbols of backwardness, but rather as a testament to the richness and beauty of their cultural traditions. She felt a deep sense of pride in herself, not just for being a prophetess recognised and supported by a respected *umalume*, but also for her profound connection to her community, the spirits of the departed, and the natural world. The rituals she engaged in allowed her to forge a closer bond with all of these elements, further deepening her sense of belonging and purpose, and bringing her closer to her calling. Seeing water would remind her how she danced as a newly graduated *ingqirhakazi ngase mlanjeni* (diviner by the river side). The excitement she had with all the attention she received, and how that was short-lived when she saw the tears in the elder's eyes—not only tears of joy, but the remembrance of the responsibility this young woman has from now on. Surrounded by the whole village, the experienced *amaggqirha* (diviners) who showed belief and trust in her calling was comforting to her. The sad part was that her innocence, which accompanies the ignorance of youth, was gone. She was no longer privy to the unseen and unheard. The revelations and visions about the lives of others would pull this young woman back and forth, blurring the boundaries of her youth. The ability to navigate this transitional state distinguishes young girls from women. I couldn't help but wonder how she must have responded to the controversy surrounding her prophecy.

As a Woman Who Did Not Break Her Silence on the Controversies Surrounding Her Prophecy

African spirituality is not black and white; it lies hidden in the everyday lives of Black Africans. It emerges from the significant aspects of people's past and present events, the living and the living dead, and the environment. Consequently, the occurrences within African communities, including the amaXhosa society in this instance, should not be approached with a superficial perspective. Life within these communities is not fragmented but interconnected. Dhlomo, a playwright who authored the play titled "The Girl Who Killed to Save", asked this question: "Is that everything that can be said about this tragedy? I hope not" (Dhlomo, 1935, pp. 1–8). Exactly. This query acknowledges the profound intricacies of amaXhosa spirituality and suggests that there is much more to be explored and understood. The famous song about Nongqawuse's "lies" makes one wonder how she would respond to the controversial lyrics (South African history online, n.d.):

Hayi uNongqawuse
Intombi kaMhlakaza,
Wasibulala isizwe sethu
Yaxelela abantu yathi kubo bonke
Baya kuvuka abantu basemangcwabeni
Bazisa uvuyo kunye ubutyebi
Kanti uthetha ubuxoki
(*Oh! Nongqawuse!*
The girl of Mhlakaza
She killed our nation.
She told the people; she told them all.
That the dead will arise from their graves
Bringing joy and bringing wealth
But she was telling a lie).

I have not come across any literature that allows her to speak. In that, other than uttering the "destructive prophecy", nothing is written about what she said. Thus, she is silent. Tomiță Ciuleia (2014, p. 184) says:

> *One may say anything about silence, that it is horrible, but sublime, as well, that it can express so many and nothing at the same time, that it can be both the sign of ignorance and that of total knowledge, that it relates to stupidity and brilliance also, that it expresses all possible emotions, from indifference to interest. One may say that silence can often express more than words…*

In my perspective and view of Nongqawuse, her silence was talking, and talking very loudly for that matter. Her silence has allowed us to imagine her, and her silence has allowed us to voice our strong opinions and interpretations about the incident and her as a young woman. Furthermore, the unexpressed words or silence serve as a testament that only a keen observer can perceive and interpret. They have the ability to discern the hidden meanings behind those unspoken words and eloquently articulate them (Luhmann & Behnke, 1994). Body language plays a crucial role in aiding the observer to perceive and interpret silence. It serves as a visual medium through which unspoken messages are conveyed. In the case of Nongqawuse, her body language, however, remains up to the imagination.

Upon hearing people singing or discussing the incident in question near the *eziko* (by the fire) in the homestead, she swiftly walked towards the door, and the echoing footsteps of *umtshana ka Mhlakaza* (niece of Mhlakaza) was heard. As she entered, her gaze swept across the rondavel hut, taking in the presence of the individuals inside. The song or conversation abruptly ceased upon her arrival. Her facial expression revealed a sense of disturbance caused by what she had overheard. However, she swiftly composed herself, proceeding to stride directly towards the fire and taking a seat. The echoing of her footsteps resonated with her firm and resolute demeanour, reflecting her strict personality. Casting her eyes around the surroundings showcased her analytical mind, attentively observing the environment and the people present. The act of sitting down symbolised the principle of equality, as she joined others around the fire, emphasising a sense of communal unity and shared experience. This shows maturity, courage, and inner strength. Her silence allowed us the freedom to inquire and interpret the incident according to our own perspectives. In doing so, she bestowed upon us both power and empowerment. It granted us the agency to explore and make sense of the event in our own unique ways, fostering a sense of ownership and autonomy in the process.

12.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the notion of a "single-story" was addressed, specifically focusing on the one-sided story of Nongqawuse. I recognised the existence of a double standard within the amaXhosa society and the exploitation of the situation by colonial powers. Through re-imagining Nongqawuse as a fully realised human being, she gained a sense of

authenticity and presence in the realm of imagination. This allowed for a broader exploration of her character, depicting her engaging in activities such as fetching water, participating in stick fighting with boys, and participating in the rituals typically conducted at *emlanjeni*. Her silence was portrayed as a form of communication that enabled different interpretations of the incident, ultimately empowering the reader to engage with the incident in diverse and meaningful ways.

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CHAPTER 13

2018 Harmonized Elections and Women's Lack of Voice in Zimbabwe: How Can Women Build Capacity?

Vongai Zvidenga Nyawo

13.1 Introduction

According to the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), the maximum five-year term of the 2013–2018 Parliament was ending at midnight on August 21, 2018. Section 158 states that a general election must be held so that polling takes place not more than thirty days before the expiry of the five-year term of Parliament, meaning not before July 23, 2018. General elections were then scheduled to be held in Zimbabwe on July 30, 2018. The purpose of the election was to elect the President and members of both houses of Parliament, that is the lower house Legislative Assembly and the upper house the Senate. Potential candidates were encouraged to register their names for this election regardless of gender. I decided to participate, as a female candidate, and what I write here is largely personal experience with regard to how women were treated by family, friends, fellow

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candidates, the constituencies, the electorate and how they fared in the end. This chapter brings out experiences of a female insider in an election in Zimbabwe, from history to her story in elections. The chapter made use of observation and participatory methodology to gather material for discussion. Observation on the ground is largely that the Zimbabwean society is not yet ready for women in politics.

13.2 Background

Spurred on by observations from an election, I decided to put together my experiences in this chapter with the hope to record her story, inform, educate, encourage and possibly debunk one or two stereotypes against women. Growing up I read historical experiences of women of valour, women leaders and queens who ruled, conquered, controlled and made names among communities across Africa and beyond. Among a handful of women who became the first to lead their countries include Golda Meir in Israel (1969–1974), Benazir Bhutto (21 June 1953–27 December 2007 in Pakistan, Indira Gandhi 1966–1977 in India, Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (13 October 1925–8 April 2013), Angela Merkel in Germany (2005–2021) and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who was elected leader of Liberia in (2006–2018) (Geisler, 2004). Their power was palpable and the knowledge that women could be powerful and be felt in their own right was shared. Surprisingly though, in modern society, the same communities, neighbourhoods and families do not see women with political ambitions in the same vein.

This chapter documents personal experiences of a female political candidate in the harmonized election of 2018. The chapter is necessitated by the quest to find out views on female candidature in politics by family, friends, fellow women and the society at large. This chapter also addresses the gap of female writers writing firsthand experiences in an election. Women with political aspirations could also benefit from the part of this chapter that discusses strategies towards capacity building.

The chapter aims to give voice to female political aspirants and to strategically capacitate them in their endeavours. The chapter addresses the following questions:

1. How are female political aspirants perceived by family, friends, electorate, fellow women and the society at large?
2. What are the hurdles for female candidates in a political election?

3. How can women emancipate, improve and empower themselves to participate in the different spaces as they aspire?

The chapter largely used the qualitative paradigm to document personal experiences. With a background of happenings in history on women and power, acquired through desktop research, the chapter blends her personal experiences and those she observed as she participated in the 2018 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe. Desktop was used again reading the Zimbabwean 2013 Constitution and the different literary works used to buttress the strategies cited to capacitate women.

13.3 Reaction by Family

Observation was that, on pronouncement of intent to stand and contest as a female candidate the reaction by family members and friends was varied but all with innuendos that pointed to the fact that getting into politics as a woman you are trespassing. Some family members would say:

1. Oh now you have decided to take your husband's name to shame?
2. Who do you know there?
3. Now you have lost it.
4. It's a man's world.
5. Do you know what happens there?
6. Can't you find something better to do?
7. What is the place for academics in politics?
8. Why would you leave your quiet and decent life and go into politics?
9. Politics is for people with rough edges.

Female electorate would say: (Asking a female candidate)

1. Who did you come with? (*Mauya nani?*)
2. Who are you standing in for? (*Makamiririra ani?*)
3. *Varikupi baba /* where is your husband?

Implications of these reactions have been that you are on your own *(ateya mariva murutsva haachatyi kusviba magaro /* he who chooses to play in the mud cannot complain about getting dirty). We told you that this is a no-go area and if anything befalls you do not blame bad lucky. What did you think you would change? This is not a place for the

faint-hearted, you do not choose to go into politics and begin to complain. Everyone was ready with a negative comment and for them any challenges met on the way were supposed to teach one a lesson in the *miromo yavakuru haiwiri pasi* / words of the elders should always be listened to fashion. This even became an excuse for them not to extend any help financially, materially and emotionally. No one cared and yet there is a great deal of the above three that is required throughout the process of elections.

13.4 Challenges Women Faced

Stereotyping

- Tradition and the individual talent (T. S. Eliot)
- The absence of a fusion between past and present

Zimbabwe is nowhere near acknowledging individual talent where women are concerned in terms of the mindset (especially in politics). Merit on its own does not qualify female candidates in politics. You are judged, censored, trammeled and compared. Tradition bundles women into a homogenous group, you cannot be different or exceptional, if you want to be seen as an individual then you must either be a prostitute, wayward or possessed. You cannot say you are a professional, they take it that you are a woman bottom line.

Patriarchy

Most painful to my heart in the election exercise were tendencies of society promoting unnecessary challenges thrown in the way of female candidates as outlined in this chapter such as derogatory sexist misogynistic talk to give the impression that female candidates cannot be equal, they can only be there because someone put them up to it. The idea is to want to assume that the moment a woman is a candidate and they are running around away from 'the home' their natural duties are neglected back home so therefore such women are irresponsible. It was also easy as a female candidate to be seen as an appendage where people are preoccupied with asking questions like; whose wife is she, who is the husband, in which family is she married, whose mother is she and who is the unfortunate mother-in-law. The feeling of not considering female candidates as individuals was

palpable from where I stood. In 1987, on average, only 7.1% of representatives in parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa were women, and in no country did the number of ministerial positions reach more than four, with 60% of all countries having no women ministers (United Nations, 1991, pp. 39–40, 1996).

Making women to fight their own was one very disturbing 'culture' that is used as a weapon by fellow candidates. Once a female candidate is considered to be a threat, a plot is set in motion to have fellow women discredit their own and, in most cases, using cheap gossip. Attacking the person and not the ball is usually one of the ways to pull someone down. If the female candidate is married and there are any challenges in that arrangement, fellow women who are in most cases not even candidates themselves are engaged to gang up on this candidate. I found this 'rent a thug' tactic most rude and unfair because even those ladies that are hired to smear mud on this lady candidate will also be shed off from the scheming team once their job is accomplished.

Taking women as commodities is very rampant in the Shona culture and across Zimbabwe. The moment you indicate your intention to run in political elections, you should be ready for what will be thrown at you. Such a candidate has to have their finances in order or else they are doomed from the beginning because male candidates will be quoting the bible where it suits them. Even the society will be quick to offer affirmative criteria for women so that merit is never the yardstick. In 1997 "decades of organising and lobbying for gender equality by women NGOs in the region" led the SADC summit to issue a Gender and Development Declaration. It commits its heads of state to achieve at least a 30% representation of women in political decision-making by 2005, to promote women's full access to and control over productive resources; and to repeal and reform all laws, amend all constitutions and change all social practices which still subject women to discrimination, and to take urgent measures to prevent the rising levels of violence against women and children (Kethusegile & Molokomme, 1999). More commitment should be made by governments to address imbalances in representation.

Funding

Elections by their very nature but especially primary elections are about three things: money, money and money. My observation was that something should be done so that women are not pushed out from

participating in elections because of lack of money. What makes them lack money largely is the fact that in most cases they are family people who should spread their little earnings over family and politics and the balancing act does not always favour them. No one asks where candidates are drawing their funding from. In some cases, candidates borrow from financial institutions, lose the election and eventually lose property to pay back the borrowed funds and some candidates end up dead because of stress and frustration. If some mitigatory actions are not taken politics loses real competitors because the talk of money features too frequently making politics overwhelming to most women. Lack of funding is very detrimental where even the use of falsehoods, lies and outright trickery is applied and mostly agents become victims through non-payment of their services.

Campaign Schedules

In the 2018 harmonized elections there were harmonized campaign schedules that made it mandatory for candidates of all levels to take their campaign to the constituency together at the same time. This system was new and its workability had not been tested. Everything said and done, observation was that these prompt schedules did not take women's peculiarities into consideration given that these women were mothers, wives, care givers who by nature are at times pregnant, breast feeding or baby-sitting. Women are unique as they undergo menstrual cycles, hot flashes, mood swings, stress and depression due to a potpourri of natural orders and disorders. As such, organization of schedules for campaigns needed to be above board and professionally planned.

The campaign schedules were haphazard and chaotic because there was no central person to pronounce how a team of candidates was supposed to move from one ward to the other, times of starting, ending times and who should really be watching and adjudicating. Worse, these were not monitored by a coordinator from a higher office and could be manipulated by the moneyed males. Distances from one ward to the other were also not considered not even to mention the rough roads and non-accessibility of some terrains. Candidates in the rural constituencies were affected the worst. Some constituencies were not covered and in others campaigns were just tokenism since they were extremely short and made very little impact.

There were gaps for election buying. Money was thrown around and for the vulnerable voter politics of the belly spoke louder than reason.

Unsanctioned use of money, rewards, food, beer and gifts was the order of the day. Some recipients of these gifts were prepared to take violence to the doorsteps of female candidates. A general lack of care, seen especially in deliberate delays in relaying important information to candidates could be seen. Transporting of election material itself was sometimes done by male candidates who vicariously gained access to manipulate the material and even misinform and mislead the electorate.

Election Approach, Language and Masculinity

Rough and crude language was used by some hired agents to discourage female candidates from entering some sections of the campaign. Words of insult and half-baked songs, composed-on-the-spot kind of songs were sung in discouragement of female candidates. Women's sensibilities were disregarded by the use of obscene and crass language. While the singing of songs in wars and in national revolutions has been known in history to bring victory, as demonstrated in Pongweni's (1982) *Songs that Won the Liberation Struggle* as well as in Nyawo's (2012) *Rhythms of Resistance: Chants that Propelled Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga*, some songs that oiled the 2018 harmonized elections were derogatory to women. Lyrics in songs would spite, poke, abuse or belittle a contestant just to embarrass, discourage, demotivate and eventually kick a candidate out of the race. The playing field was not levelled and merit was not used for screening. No authority attempted to stop such abuse, in fact verbal abuse was seen as something to expect, verbal abuse was sanitized.

13.5 Capacity Building During Primary Election: The Weakest Link

Political parties should attempt to know the candidates who are participating in an election at any given time in detail. It is easy to end up with fake people because the checking and verification so far has loopholes. There were no coordinators on the ground on most important stages. Capacity assessment per candidate is important so that some candidates are discouraged from participating before they waste their little resources. Political parties should avoid lip service to the 50/50 distribution of opportunities because complaints by female candidates on verbal and other abuses were not addressed. Political parties should avoid uncontested seats for male candidates only because this is day light robbery and corruption.

13.6 Open Letter to My Fellow Women

If women must make an impact on the political arena, we should reinvent ourselves by heightening our own agency and be our own liberators. James Matthew (1982) in the poem 'Can the white man speak for me' spells out how another person cannot be assigned to speak for the other. According to the poem, it is only the concerned person who should rise up to the occasion and fight on their own behalf. If women are going to borrow men's voices to speak then women should expect no miracle because it is men's voices that would be heard. Remember the Lesotho story where there are more females and who are even better educated than men but the same women vote for men to lead them demonstrating that women cannot trust one of their number with such responsibility and power. Women have to be prepared enough so that they do not become victims of sexual prejudice in politics (Moloi, 1991).

'Can the white man speak for me?'

Can he feel my pain when his laws tear wife and child from my side and I am forced to work a thousand miles away?
Does he know my anguish as I walk his streets at night
my hand fearfully clasping my pass?
Is he with me in the loneliness of my bed in the bachelor barracks with my longing driving me to mount my brother?
Will he soothe my despair as I am driven insane by scraps of paper permitting me to live?
Can the white man speak for me? (Matthew James, 1982)
CAN THE MALE FOLK SPEAK FOR WOMEN? Allow me also to ask.

Women Can Do It

As Jonathan Jansen (2011) aptly titles his book *We Need to Talk*, we definitely need to talk between and amongst ourselves as the women folk. We know our strength and shortcomings better as sisters. We need to deliberate on points that have to do with preparedness, courage, stamina, alertness, dexterity, footwork, lack of fear, not being easily intimidated, vigilance, self-criticism, open mindedness, self-trust and focus. A Nigerian proverb has it that, you cannot beat the drum and dance at the same time, because divided attention will not allow you to achieve much. As women

on a journey, we need not carry too much baggage. Women again are naturally bad travellers, we want to carry the whole bedroom and the kitchen with us forgetting that those who conquer heights do not carry the whole house but just a back pack with essentials.

How Do You Prepare Yourself for Achievement?

Women need to do deep search into self. They should do some literature review (as one would with academic dissertations) to be aware of other success stories and even failures. One requires awareness. It is important and powerful to know. Climbing ladders of leadership of any kind by its very nature may cause acrophobia, the fear of heights, you look up you feel it can not be done, you look down suddenly there is a big whole below you. The body begins to be affected by forces of gravity, hands begin to sweat and you lack grip, legs cannot carry you again, the feet is slippery, eyes are affected by reflection from the glass surface that you wish to conquer. It is also prudent to take criticism positive and use what is useful to better oneself.

Then What Do You Do?

It is vital to consult a mirror, friends and others who have been there (of course with a pinch of salt because the Shona say *'zano pangwa unerako'/* seek ideas when you already have your own). Use of positive terminology also spurs one on, for example my glass is half full, implying you are on your way filling it not half empty on its way down, if you do not succeed at first, not if you fail at first. If you can think of it, you can do it is a slogan that can also help women forge on. Cliches like where there is a will there is a way also work in such cases. It is important as well to be aware of events around one through reading and listening to the news for information. Create a niche for oneself even in behaviour, they say great people have great habits.

How Should Women Build Capacity to Enter Political Spaces?

Before you enter any space there is need for correct attitude. Sometimes women are overwhelmed by disbelief which could be informed by their background, schooling, education, gender, ethnicity, stature, weight, status, complexion, genetic make-up, etc. An example could be that of the

American Programme called 'Fear Factor' that features people taking on daring or audacious acts in order to conquer their fears.

What is important is being aware of the complexities and rules of entering into unfamiliar spaces as it were. Tsikata (2005) points to the fact that initiatives to improve women often tend to the technocratic and therefore require knowledge on the part of women for them to understand and benefit. From where I stand, women need to be alive to the vagueness of going to an unknown place, the anticipation, the expectation, the anxiety, the uncertainty, the nerves, the adrenaline, yet you have the option to remain in your zone of comfort where you achieve little. You need to devise ways of dealing with personal fear which could be a huge obstacle. Some women always tell themselves that it can never happen before they even attempt, what you say is how it happens.

Know what your issues as women are. Tsikata (1997) asks a question as to whether women are really getting transformed by each day and by each initiative. Women need to know what their issues are so that transformation is targeted. Women are peculiar (anatomy, gender and gender roles) often a time we lack space of our own because you have to play mother, wife and daughter-in-law in a family, roles whose activities are usually dictated by other people while you just dance to the tune. You need emotional intelligence to balance family issues that threaten to send you to Ingutsheni. When you join a new family you get the highway-code for that family and suddenly what you knew earlier is made useless, you need to de-teach yourself.

As women we do not always have the capacity to execute our duties, we lack skill, access, funding, models, knowledge, education, awareness, befitting mentality, opportunity and drive because of period mood swings, menopausal disorders, after-birth depression, Munchausen insanity, morning sickness during pregnancy, fibroid problems. We lack dreams, vision, foresight, esteem and confidence because sometimes we also have not done our part for instance when elections are being discussed you cannot talk because you lack facts, when people dance you will not attempt because you have been too busy to watch your wait, when others smile you cannot even open your mouth because the budget was too tight for you to add a mouthwash or mint to your groceries, when others walk you cannot because your tips are long finished and they make a noise that draws all the attention on you which you cannot afford because you have other issues like, ill-fitting outfit, a hairstyle that has overstayed its welcome and not well-taken-care-of jacket.

Women need support from their own kind. Avoid woman on woman animosity, as Gisela (1987) would put it. Often, we suffer from emotional neglect, especially when you do well, people do not seem to notice and they do not comment. You wear what you think is your best outfit from the bottom of your suit-case no one says anything, you go for an expensive hairstyle other ladies glue their mouth, so next time you decide not to change your hairstyle, that is, when everybody has something to say. We need to pumper each other with encouraging statements, women require attention to function and grow, for our emotional ascendancy to avoid emotional bankruptcy.

Actual disasters happen in the mind stressing the importance of mind sets and attitudes. Learn to resist conformity and be a rebel here and there if things must work in your favour. I am thinking here of a female novel writer in England in the nineteenth century called George Eliot. This was not her real name, she was born Mary Ann Evans but when she went into writing at a time when society was driven by church values that did not have space for female writers she took a pseudo name, a pen name or what the French call nom de plume, male names of her choice to hide her actual identity to achieve her purpose. Under the name George Eliot she published five novels among them *Silas Marner (*1861*)* and *Middle March (*1871*)* before she was discovered but the world shall forever remember her writings.

So sometimes you need to change your name metaphorically if that would for a while conceal your background, ethnicity or your previous mistakes. *We Need New Names* according to novelist NoViolet Bulawayo (2014). Women need to come out of the cocoon and be counted. We are born too powerful we appear weak. As women we have allowed men to violate us during our times of purification, if pictures like the one painted by Ayi Kwei Armah (1968) in his novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* are to be given no space. Armah compares a bad breath to rotten menstrual blood. Women need to come together and make a clarion statement against such thinking, writings and positions. As women we need to build capacity in order to catch up, you cannot enter anywhere if you are the type that waits to be given news by other people. There is nothing you read about or get to know about first except who is dating who on campus or in the village.

Let us beware of patriarchy, the issue of patrilocality where women are seen in patriarchal terms in Africa, through iconographical lenses as mothers or as family people. The world uses a cultural strategy to suit what the

world of men needs, persisting in the post-colony as a way of controlling them, confining women in the domestic sphere and the women have to be content with complementary roles. A woman should be seen and not heard. The paying of lobola, some say has made it worse for women (debatable).

Women should be alive to the space that they want to enter, if you get into male space expect resistance and be ready with plan B, C and D of going around the resistance. Some talk of women who are shock absorbers, not necessarily, they did their homework and planned their escape. Because of the way African tradition is shaped women are affected more by family issues. Have an agenda, because when you do not know where you are going, every road leads there. Kazembe (1986) would call this the women issue.

Create knowledge space because ignorance has no defence, you surely have to know something. Zimbabwe has severally been rated the African country with the highest literacy rate of 90.60%, the only country above 90%, but what have we done about that as women. Are we at 90% also or below. Keep handy information at the tips of your figures, be world wise. Women should endeavour to destroy demeaning and insensitive gender epithets such as 'if you want to hide something from a woman put it in a book', (assuming they will never find it because they lack the reading culture).

Be ready to play your part, meritocracy versus affirmative action. Get out of your zones of comfort some will say I will get married, I am from an affluent family, at my age it is too late, after all the girl next door does also not have it. Remember the promise of the land on the other side, the theme of quest and discovery, if you do not want to be adventurous you will never know greatness. Interestingly the world is aware that (1) when you push a woman forward the world moves with her (2) you educate a woman you educate the nation and (3) a woman was God's last creation. After her, God realized that He had just created a master piece and to continue to create would mess up His wonderful creation.

13.7 Conclusion

Women should not be bogged down in past tragedies, yesterday cannot be changed, move on. When you leave this page I want you to say Goodbye to all that which you were doing wrong. What did I say 'Goodbye to all that'. In the 1930s to 40s there was a Spanish civil war led by international

socialists against General Franco in Spain, Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in German, in other words they were fighting forces of Nazism, however, realizing that they no longer believed in what they were fighting for they recorded their experiences in autobiographical writings. Some were poets like Ezra Pound, others were prose writers like Robert Graves (1929) who wrote an autobiography entitled *Goodbye to All That*. Ernest Hemmingway (1940) wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. George Orwell (1948) wrote *Homage to Catalonia*, this is your writer of *Animal Farm* and *1984* that you may happen to know. Using these three writers, I am saying to women, for whom the bell tolls, pay homage to Catalonia (being women, and make the female fraternity proud) and say Goodbye to all that. Refuse to reside on icantdoit Street and enter that political space, if you are not interested do not pull down those who stand on your behalf. Themes of resistance are also captured strongly by female writers like Tsitsi Dangarembga in (*Nervous Conditions*, 1988), Yvonne Vera in (*Nehanda*, 1993), Mariama Ba in (*So Long a Letter*, 1980), Emecheta Buchi in (*Joys of Motherhood*, 1979), among other pieces of work that demonstrate the spirit of resistance to oppression. The female folk would do themselves a lot of good by reading wide.

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CHAPTER 14

The Evolution of Women's Positionality in Post-Colonial Lesotho's Households, Education and Politics: From Being a 'Child' to Being a Decision Maker

Itumeleng Mokhele, Kelello Rakolobe, and Makhulu Makumane

14.1 Introduction

Prior to obtaining its independence, Lesotho was an absolute patriarchal nation where women were regarded as 'minors'. It seems that within the legal framework of the then Lesotho, to be assigned the title of a 'minor' meant that a person could not make any decisions as the law considered them unfit to do so due to the inability to make sound decisions, particularly on land and inheritance-related matters (Help Lesotho, 2018).

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Seemingly, that was the position of women in colonial Lesotho as they were confined exclusively within the households. During the colonial period, women were considered servants to their husbands as their primary roles included reproductive ones, preparation of meals for their families, fetching wood and water, maintaining hygiene while also observing and abiding by rules set by husbands who were regarded as heads of families (Letuka et al., 2004; Molapo, 2005). However, with the establishment of schools constructed by missionaries in Lesotho, there was a gradual transition into the post-colonial period as girls embarked on education where they took up nursing and handicrafts (Mareka, 1952). The country's independence did not only liberate the country from its colonisers, but there was an evolution of women's positionality in households, education and politics. The shift was triggered by the duality of Lesotho's legal system, which is going to be explored in this chapter. The evolution paved way to the reshaping of women in post-colonial Lesotho as they made way into the education, economic as well as political avenues present in the country. As key positions in the economic sectors were reserved for men, the post-colonial era shifted the paradigm by making education accessible to women. That did not only drive the evolution from being a 'child' to being 'a decision maker', but it pushed them into the political and employment spheres which were dominated by men in colonial Lesotho. The shift did not only affect the reimaging but it also led to the reimagination of the place of women due to the change of narrative brought by the evolution in women's positionality. In this chapter, the seemingly changing position of women in Lesotho in different sectors will be explored in-depth using the document analysis.

14.2 Previous Debates on Women's Positionality During the Colonial Era

In this section, authors explore previous debates on women's positionality and traditional roles in households, education and politics. The purpose is to get the context in which women's rights operated prior to the evolution of their positions in different spheres of life.

Women as Homemakers

According to Moagi and Mtombeni (2020), the gender oppression school of historical analysis maintains that pre-colonial Southern African women

were confined to the domestic space and were oppressed by their men. They argue that they were also depicted as minors who sought protection from their male counterparts. While their position holds in some Southern African countries, the Kingdom of Lesotho, previously known as Basutoland, operates on a dual legal system. To this effect, Lesotho's legal system is divided into Customary Law (indigenous law), which comprises Basotho customs and values codified in what is known as the Laws of Lerotholi of 1910. There is also the Roman Dutch Law infused into Lesotho's legal system by the British colonisers dictating from the Cape Colony (Modo, 2002).

Customarily, Basotho women were regarded as homemakers whose major role was that of reproduction and family procreation as well as ensuring that they take care of their families and communities. Attached to these roles was the responsibility of women to organise themselves into organisations, formations and or associations that would assist in making their tasks easier and this was done through the formation of charity organisations (Letuka et al., 2004). Additionally, by virtue of being a patriarchal society, Basotho had strict rules that women had to comply with as an indication that they respected their husbands as heads of their respective households. In this regard, patriarchy was used as a major tool to marginalise women in decision making in all spheres (Monyane, 2007).

Alongside the customary law, there was also the introduction of Roman Dutch Law, by the British colonisers. The stipulations of the Roman Dutch Law, as was the case with Customary Law, were highly gender insensitive towards women. Some of the stipulations of the Roman Dutch Law read:

(a) the husband is the head of the family and possesses the decisive voice in all matters affecting the common life of the spouses;
(b) joint or household property is under the administration of the husband and he is vested with the legal powers to alienate or deal with it as he wishes without the necessity for his wife's consent;
(c) women cannot enter into contract or take up gainful employment without their husband's prior authorization;
(d) a woman does not possess *locus standi injudicio* to participate in legal proceedings unassisted by her husband, whether as a plaintiff or defendant. (Maloka, 1997, p. 9)

The phrase *locus standi injudicio* found in the above excerpt is a legal phrase that means the right to bring an action, to be heard in court, or to address the court on a matter before it (Makloa, 1997). The above stipulations are an indication that indeed women in Lesotho were treated as minors who had no say in decision making in their own homes. In this regard, a married woman was the responsibility of the husband, while a single woman would remain the responsibility of her father or brother in the case where there is no father for various reasons. Alternatively, a single woman would be the responsibility of the uncles (Maloka, 1997; Sadie, 2014; Chingono, 2016). In all these scenarios, a woman remained the responsibility of a male figure and could not make decisions affecting her own life.

Conversely, according to Ntimo-Makara (2009), Sesotho Customary Law is void of 'marital power' and 'community of property'. Ntimo-Makara further asserts that these two concepts are foreign as they were brought by the Roman Dutch Law and by Christianity to the Basotho society. It is thus her contention that Sesotho Customary Law does not condone the married woman's minority status as it (Sesotho Customary Law) subscribes to the notion of a woman being married by the family (Ntimo-Makara, 2009). Although the latter argument seems to exonerate the Sesotho Customary Law from depicting women as minors, in the same publication, Ntimo-Makara (2009) admits that patriarchy is responsible for gender discrimination prominent amongst the Basotho society. In other words, she concedes that the Customary Law perpetuates the minority status of women, either directly or indirectly.

Furthermore, Christianity played a pivotal role in elevating the status of males through gender supremacy. In this aspect, Christianity encouraged disempowerment of women by giving the husbands absolute powers to control and dictate to their spouses (Chingono, 2016). It is hence imperative to say that stipulations of Customary or indigenous Law and those of the imported Roman Dutch Law relegated women to positions of minors within households and communities. This is affirmed by Sehau (1956), who refers to a man working in the mines who wrote a letter to his Christian wife, charging her to have their son sent to the circumcision school. Sehau posits that the woman begged her husband not to pressurise her to do something which was contradictory to the will of her God, to which the man replied as thus *"I am your god, and you must do whatever I command you"* (Sehau, 1956, p. 4).

Women in Education

It is the contention of Ntimo-Makara (2009) that the influence of Christianity on Basotho Customary Law permeated all institutions in the public domain. Such institutions include but are not limited to politics, government, legal system, religion and education.

It is through education that another form of alienating women and considering them to be minors could be seen. The general practice amongst Basotho families was that of keeping girls at home and not sending them to schools, as was the case with boys. The reason for this discrimination against the girl child came about because Basotho had the saying that "banana ke lefa la balichaba" (loosely translated girls belong to the families in which they will marry into). Hence, it seemingly did not make economic sense to the girl's family to send someone from whom they will not benefit, to school (Molapo, 2005).

Additionally, even for the few girls that made it through school, the patriarchal practices and norms prevented them from gaining meaningful employment. Unlike their male counterparts, women were sidelined from employment in both the public and private sector, a case that led to their under-representation in these sectors (Chingono, 2016). While, Thabane (2017) indicates that during the colonial era, men were employed, research undertaken at that period is silent about women. Moreover, the same source states that among the earliest Basotho appointees to employment were sons of Moshoeshoe I, that is Nehemia, Tšekelo and George, who joined the police and enjoyed senior ranks even in the early years of the post-colonial era. He further indicates that in years and decades that followed, more sons of chiefs joined the workforce as policemen and dominated senior police ranks well into the post-colonial period.

Moreover, in the education sector, females who were employed in the teaching profession endured another form of patriarchy. In this case, in the years between 1836 and 1995, female teachers employed in church-owned schools were expelled from schools if they had children out of wedlock (Monyane, 2007). This meant that only a married female teacher could have a child, while others were not allowed. Furthermore, Komiti and Moorosi (2020, p. 97) lament that, "patriarchy has thus been a stumbling block to women's success for hundreds of years and the subordination of women under patriarchy is deeply rooted in Basotho custom and law". From the preceding paragraphs, it seems that indeed patriarchy and

patriarchal informed practices have contributed and proved to be hurdles for Basotho women in their attempt to attain their dreams and aspirations.

Women in Politics

Another public domain that forms part of the scope of this chapter pertaining to positionality of women is that of politics.

When it comes to women empowerment, the church, despite its embedded patriarchal practices, has always given Basotho women a chance in leadership. Women in the church, in particular the nuns in the Catholic Church, were given authority even before Basotho men could attain any powers. The nuns had the powers to run and control the daily activities in schools, clinics and community outreach programmes (Epprecht, 1995).

Regarding the role of women in politics, it is worth noting that from 1966 when Lesotho got its independence from Britain to date, it has never had a female Prime Minister. This status quo has remained both under one party rule as well as under coalition governments that have prevailed from 2012 to date (Rakolobe, 2021). Despite women being majority voters, their dilemma of under-representation in their political party structures is evident through their under-representation in parliament, cabinet and other government decision-making structures (Sadie, 2014).

However, it is imperative to note that irrespective of their small numbers, some Basotho women have always been willing and ready to take part in the male-dominated political landscape of Lesotho. An example is that in the very first elections that were held in Lesotho in 1965 (one year prior to independence) a woman by the name of Agatha Griffiths became the first woman to contest elections under the Basutoland National Party (BNP) in the Thabana-Ntlenyana Constituency. The said woman was one of the wives of Chief Seeiso Griffiths who was the paramount chief of Basutoland (the name of Lesotho before independence) (Letuka et al., 2004).

Moreover, through education, Basotho women who joined institutions of higher learning such as the National University of Lesotho (NUL) during the post-colonial era also got exposed to the political landscape of the country. The Vice Chancellor's Report of 1981 as cited by Thabane (2017) shows that a year III law student by the name of 'Makeki Kabi was detained for 20 days in October 1981 for openly showing interest in politics of the land. The action reveals her participation in the political life of the country.

Additionally, the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) also contributed immensely to the empowerment of women by giving them a voice and platform in politics. As early as the 1960s the BCP had a Women's League which became quite instrumental in the election campaigns (both local government and national assembly elections). The league's main roles included singing and praise poems (Epprecht, 1995).

Also, the BCP Women's League had a Constitution which clearly stipulated its role within the movement. Some of the objectives of the Women's League are stated by Epprecht (1995, p. 46) as follows, "to protect and raise children as good citizens of the country, and to give proper care to all the guests of the party". Looking at the objectives of the league, one can already depict some traces of patriarchy. The implication embedded in the quotation is that it is the responsibility of women to raise children and to take care of visitors, a notion that depicts women as homemakers not leaders in a public sphere.

14.3 Theorising Women's Positionality

This chapter is framed by the African Feminism Theory, which takes into consideration the history and diversity of African realities, inclusive of the challenges that African women experience in their everyday lives (Atanga, 2013; Maathai, 2009). This theory, as with Western Feminism, is cognisant of the glaring inequalities that exist between the sexes, with males, more often than not, having the upper hand in most aspects of life, resulting in female subordination (Salzman, 2018). In other words, this theory states that males are privileged with patriarchal dividends at the peril of females (Amaefula, 2021). Thus, feminism as a concept seeks to explore and understand ways in which females are exploited and oppressed socially, politically, economically and psychologically, in view of mitigating and curbing these engraved injustices (Amaefula, 2021). This theory posits that African women "fight for equal opportunities and access to health, economic and educational resources and decision-making positions in both private and public domains" (Atanga, 2013, p. 302). This latter assertion denotes that females, as opposed to their male counterparts, are offered unequal access to varying opportunities and resources in different areas including in households, education, political, health and economic sectors.

This has prompted the development of the African feminism theory with the express intent of balancing the field, attempting to put women at the same level as men in terms of decision making (Tamale, 2006). Thus, this theory sees females taking up space in domestic as well as professional spaces: in the household, in the education sector, in politics and economically. Tamale (2006) posits that women are actively engaged in these sectors in the post-colonial era both for personal, but mostly for financial emancipation in view of striving for gender equality and ideally discarding total patriarchal submission. This suggests that this theory advocates for transformation, from females being enforced in patriarchal and oppressive situations to them being emancipated, and taking up space, thus embracing 'radical' strategies (Tamale, 2006). This theory is therefore applicable in this chapter as it advocates for gender equality, especially in the post-colonial era, and sees females taking up space in households, in the education sector and in the political sphere.

14.4 Methodology

This chapter adopts a qualitative approach, wherein document analysis is used as a data generation method. Bowen (2009, p. 27) states that document analysis is a "systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents - both printed and electronic [...] material". In this chapter, data from documents were examined and interpreted in view of engendering and developing empirical meaning (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis was deemed as suitable for this chapter as it provided authentic and relevant data that talks to drivers that led to the shifts which resulted in the reimaging as well as the reimagination of the place of women in the post-colony.

Five (5) documents comprising the Constitution of Lesotho, 1993; Sexual Offences Act, 2003; Married Persons Equality Act, 2006; Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2005–2015; and National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011 were purposively selected and analysed as they align with women's positionality in post-colonial Lesotho's households, education and politics.

Guided analysis was used to analyse data. This type of analysis, according to Samuel (2009), involves determining categories prior to data generation and modifying those categories as per interaction with data at the analysis stage. The proceeding section outlines the document analysis in line with the repositioning of women in post-colonial Lesotho.

14.5 Repositioning Women in Post-Colonial Lesotho

Upon the attainment of independence in 1966, not only did the country change her name and her formation of governance but there were also gradual shifts that affected the repositioning of women in households and extending to education and politics. To achieve the emancipation and capacitation of Basotho women in the mentioned three domains (home, education and politics), the government of Lesotho, by virtue of being a signatory to international and regional treaties and protocols against gender discrimination, decided to enact some laws and policies to eradicate gender inequalities. It is for this reason that legislation such as, The Constitution of Lesotho, 1993, Sexual Offences Act, 2003, Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2005–2015, Married Persons Equality Act, 2006 and National Assembly Act, 2011 were formulated.

Document Analysis

The purpose of this document analysis is to establish the context in which the Basotho women's rights and aspirations in the home or household, the education and the political sphere takes place.

Theme 1: Positionality of Women

The Constitution of Lesotho, 1993

The Constitution of Lesotho (1993) is discussed by authors such as Ntimo-Makara (2009), Chingono (2016), Kali (2018), Mojapelo and Faku (2020) and 'Nyane and Rakolobe (2022). The claims emanate because the Constitution, 1993 explicitly allows for discrimination against women in the cases that involve customary and personal matters. Again, the Constitution, 1993, lacks stipulations pertaining to how gender equality can be reached in all positions in the Lesotho public domain, including household, politics and education.

Additionally, an example of the lack of gender sensitivity in the Constitution, 1993 is in Section 4(1) and Section 5(1) which stipulate:

> 4. Fundamental human rights and freedoms:
>
> (1) Whereas every person in Lesotho is entitled, whatever his race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status to fundamental human rights and freedoms […].
>
> 5. Right to life (1) Every human being has an inherent right to life. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.

The preceding excerpts from the Constitution use the word 'his' to refer to a person. This is an indication of lack of gender sensitivity. Furthermore, the Constitution, 1993, Section 18(4) (c) allows for discrimination against a person on the basis of customary law. An indication that despite having provisions for protecting citizens against discrimination, there are cases in which it is allowed and supported by the supreme law of the country.

Theme 2: Households

Sexual Offences Act, 2003

By virtue of being a patriarchal society where women and their rights are often sidelined, Lesotho has often been faced with cases of sexual offenses that are spurred by the superiority of men, and their interpretation that they even have rights over women and their bodies (Motene, 2021). It is upon realising the dilemma associated with sexual abuse that the government of Lesotho promulgated the Sexual Offences Act, 2003 as a means to quell the sexual offenses that were on the rise. In particular, sexual offenses were often meted against women and girls. The stipulations of the Act give an indication that indeed the government was intentional about its move to suppress sexual offenses. The Act further protects women in marriages and relationships from being sexually abused. The stipulations of Section 3(3) clearly indicate that it is an offense to force a spouse to engage in sex if she/he is sick, if the partner demanding sex is suspected to have sexually transmitted illnesses or if the spouse threatens the other to engage in sex. Moreover, other examples drawn from the Sexual Offences Act, 2003 are about the weight of penalties given to those found guilty of sexual offenses. Section 32 categorises offenses and penalties that should go with each offense.

Conversely, Kali (2018) laments that despite the promulgation of Sexual Offences Act, 2003 and its noble stipulations, sexual offenses perpetrated against women in Lesotho are still very high. This suggests that there is a need for Lesotho to review the policy and try to impose heavier sentences, or alternatively strengthen their education and campaigns on sexual offenses.

Married Persons Equality Act, 2006

Prior to the promulgation of the Married Persons Equality Act, 2006, women were considered as minors who could not take major decisions for themselves and their families. In their role as minors, women were expected to get permission from their husbands (or fathers or brothers for those who were unmarried) to carry out activities such as wearing a pair of trousers, owning land and opening a bank account to mention but a few (Posholi, 2012).

The proclamation of Married Persons Equality Act, 2006 was thus accepted with relief by women and women rights organisations as it removed most of the mentioned hurdles. However, the presence of this Act has not given women a clean slate in accessing and exploring all the avenues they would like to. This is because the issue of land allocation remains a thorn on their side as they still struggle to freely access land, moreso, as land allocation in rural areas remains customarily the prerogative of traditional leaders who still make it difficult for women to have access (Posholi, 2012; Kali, 2018).

Theme 3: Education

The Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2005–2015

Upon independence, many challenges seem to have taken place in the then 'new' Lesotho. However, in the education front, very little to no change took place as education continued to be geared towards the creation of an "elite class of civil servants" (Thelejane, 1990).

The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005–2015, is one of the documents in the education sector that encouraged women capacitation and emancipation in the field of education. The Strategic Plan proposes the establishment of a curriculum that is gender-sensitive as a means to accomplish gender equity and equality at all levels of the education system.

Regarding the place of women in educational advancements, the independence and post-independence eras spelled a new shift that saw them accessing education. The practice of women getting education became accepted as a norm (Molapo, 2005). All that women had to do was to abide by their husbands' rules through their execution and undertaking of the aforementioned activities (Sehau, 1956) This shift also saw more women than their male counterparts joining the teaching profession. The numbers of women are so big that even the majority of leadership (principal) positions in Lesotho primary schools are held by women. But, the post primary schools still remain with a majority of males in leadership, despite having a higher number of female teachers than male. In the case of tertiary institutions, the number of women in leadership is even lower (Komiti & Moorosi, 2020).

Moreso, the reasons associated with fewer women being at the helm of institutions seem to stem from the notion that women sometimes struggle to strike a balance between their domestic roles of being homemakers and their careers. In some instances, women shy away from taking charge of lucrative positions for fear of being labelled derogatively as being 'loose' or ruthlessly referred to as misfits by the community (Posholi, 2012).

Theme 4: Politics

National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011

The Kingdom of Lesotho has its roots in customs and traditions informed by a patriarchal inclination. The Kingdom is hence ruled by a King and chiefs who are predominantly male (Posholi, 2012). Despite their deep patriarchal roots, Basotho have always found a place for women in the chieftaincy through regency. Although women cannot inherit chieftainship, they can act as regents for their sons, a practice that began a long time ago in pre-colonial Lesotho and is upheld to date (Epprecht, 1995).

It is in the midst of this patriarchal chieftainship that Lesotho politics were established. It is thus understandable that somehow the practices held in chieftainships may have influences on Lesotho politics and political practices. It is partly because of this context that, in 2011, Lesotho decided to promulgate the National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011. The purpose of the Act was to strive for gender equality in governance by encouraging an increase in the number of women parliamentarians. The Act proposed a 'zebra' model to be used by all political parties when submitting their

party lists. The zebra model means that a proportional representation list that has 40 members should comprise an equal number of males and females. The Act stipulates that the list is written in such a way that a male is followed by a female and vice versa where the female is listed first (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2011).

When looking at political parties which are called big political parties in Lesotho, their National Executive Committees are dominated by males. The interesting part is that although the Constitutions of these parties appear to support gender equality, their practices are different. Political parties such as the LCD [Lesotho Congress for Democracy], DC [Democratic Congress] and AD [Alliance of Democrats] have clauses that propose for a 30% representation at all levels of their leadership structures while MEC [Movement for Economic Change] proposes 50%.

Nonetheless, the reality is very different from the propositions mentioned in the preceding paragraph. To this effect, a look at the 2017 election results paints a rather gloomy picture for the future of women in Lesotho politics, despite being associated with political parties that have Constitutions promising gender equality. In 2017, of the 1368 candidates that contested in the National Assembly Elections under political parties, 958 were male while 40 were female ('Nyane & Rakolobe, 2022). The figures already show huge disparities between male and female, with the latter being given few chances in their political parties.

Again, a look at the recent 2022 National Assembly elections results is yet another indication that Lesotho still has a long way to go to realise the 30% women representation as proposed by the SADC Gender Protocol.

14.6 Concluding and Beginning

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the evolution of women's positionality in post-colonial Lesotho's households, education and political sectors. The findings in this chapter demonstrate that there has been an inconsequential paradigm shift in terms of the roles that women play, specifically in three sectors: households, education and politics, which were the phenomena in this chapter. In other words, the positionality within which women operate in the post-colonial era has seemingly shifted, though insignificantly so, as compared to the pre-colonial and colonial eras. This may be attributed to the fact that deliberate efforts were made to promulgate legislation in the post-colonial era, which ostensibly curbed gender inequalities and resultantly permitted women to assume different,

and, to some extent, unoppressed roles in households, in the education sector and in the political sphere. However, it is noteworthy that the existence of such legislation, though implemented, has not completely discarded the glaring inequalities that women have experienced, and still experience, owing to the ineffective implementation of the said legislation. This suggests that there is a conspicuous and indubitable need to review the legislation with the express intent to dispose of any remnants of exploitation and oppressive practices that women are subjected to. In this way, women would ideally be in a position to take up spaces in varying sectors, as they would be operating from a socially, politically, economically and psychologically even playfield as that which is being afforded their male counterparts.

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CHAPTER 15

Shifting Gender Dynamics in Postcolonial Lesotho: The Lived Experiences of Some Female Secondary School Principals

Tebello Tlali and Sepiriti Sepiriti

15.1 Introduction

Women have always played a vital role in nation building and social development. Despite all forms of social injustices directed to them, women played a crucial role in pre-colonial times, throughout the colonial and postcolonial period. The duties they continue to perform include managing the household, production and reproduction. The advent of formal education further enabled women to participate in different job sectors just like their male counterparts (Kosar et al., 2014). That is, formal education empowered most women to break through the "glass ceiling" to gradually occupying school administrative roles that were traditionally occupied by males (Komiti & Moorosi, 2020). Regardless of women being viewed as valuable members of the society in the African societies, patriarchy stance also has a strong influence on socialisation and daily

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practices. Thus, irrespective of sex, school principals are expected to undertake a variety of tasks ranging from being chief financial officers to ensuring school effectiveness (MoET, 2010). However, female school principals' authority is sometimes undermined and discredited. The female school leaders in Lesotho do not enjoy the same privileges as their male counterparts mainly due to societal prejudice. Such prejudices continue despite the fact that female administrators are often perceived as friendlier, being able to communicate, empathetic and attentive to mention but a few compared to their male counterparts (Kosar et al., 2014). The unique challenges facing female principals are maintained in the face of the efforts by the Government of Lesotho to sensitise and promote gender parity amongst the Basotho nation by enacting policies and legislations, such as the Gender Policy of 2003 and the Land Act of 2010.

Issues pertaining to gender disparity and prejudice directed towards female principals have been researched in some Southern African countries. Such countries include South Africa (Khumalo, 2021; Khoza, 2019; Ndlovu & Proches, 2019; Ndebele, 2018; Schmidt & Mestry, 2015) and Zimbabwe (Shava et al., 2019) to mention a few. Similar studies were also conducted in other African countries and the rest of the world, for example in Ivory Coast (Oyeniran & Lili, 2020); Ghana (Djan & Gordon, 2020) and Turkey (Kosar et al., 2014). These cited studies acknowledge that while gender roles have drastically evolved in the modern society and more women have attained positions as school administrators in postcolonial times, they are constantly faced with unique challenges than their male counterparts. This chapter sought to contribute to the growing body of literature on women and society, by exploring and documenting the work-related challenges faced by the Lesotho female school principals; and to also identify some of their coping mechanisms as they continue with their struggle to shift gender dynamics in the postcolonial era.

To achieve the above objectives, this chapter is guided by the following guiding questions.

- What are the work-related challenges faced by the Lesotho female school principals in the postcolonial era?
- Which coping strategies have they adopted over the years to overcome the challenges they face?

15.2 Theoretical Grounding

This chapter departs from a theoretical grounding that triangulates the postcolonial critique with the critical theory. In the context of this chapter, the two theories complement one another and provide a comprehensive theoretical triangulation for the chapter. The advent of colonialism inherently promoted marginalisation of certain groups of society which included black or African females. According to Krauss (2017, p. 178) the colonial culture was "biased towards a white, elite, middle-class, masculine" inclinations. Historically this led to enormous disparities among racial groups, social classes and gender groups, thereby leading to enormous exclusion of women in the Global South in terms of economic and leadership opportunities (Leibowitz et al., 2015; Maruma, 2017).

On the one hand, the postcolonial critique looks at social phenomena through non-Eurocentric perspectives and epitomises diversity, plurality and inclusion of previously marginalised pockets of the society (Heleta, 2018; Zembylas, 2018; Tlali, 2023). In this regard, the postcolonial critique justifies attempts to restore social justice, equality and inclusion of those that were historically deprived or marginalised (Tikly, 2019; Tlali, 2023). In addition, Waghid and Hibbert (2018) highlight that foregrounding decolonial practices, is indeed imperative in ensuring social justice. A mandate for the postcolonial critique is to decolonise social practices by rehabilitating indigenous knowledge while at the same time re-defining other cosmopolitan practices in postcolonial terms (Madsen & Mahlck, 2018; Peters, 2019; Thielsch, 2020; Tlali, 2023).

On the other hand, the critical theory seeks to understand and critique cultural reservations including exploitation, discriminations and power struggles that affect different societal groups (Yee et al., 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Lesotho being considered to be a patriarchal state (Partners for Prevention, 2018), women are constrained by entrenched perceptions that mistreat, discriminate as well as marginalise them (Metsing, 2015). Critical theory as a consequence strives to resolve barriers within a society (Gemma, 2018; Mahmoud et al., 2018). Therefore, critical theory is suitable due to its ability to critically unpack deep-rooted reservations towards women leadership and advocate for social reforms.

This chapter therefore adopted both the postcolonial critique and critical theory lenses as they strive not only to narrate the lived experiences of the Lesotho female principals, but also to advance their liberation from suppressive torrent. The adopted theoretical stances lay a justifiable foundation upon which African females can be recognised and empowered.

15.3 A Historical Perspective on Gender Roles

Societies have historically established gender roles that differentiate males from females. As societies grew and evolved, they entrenched "acceptable" behaviours and roles for both men and women. These distinctively determined what men and women can and cannot do (Dublin, 2007; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Accordingly, males are ascribed to agentic characteristics (mastering, assertiveness, independence) while females are expected to assume more communal roles (Dublin, 2007; Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Moake & Robert, 2021). According to Priyashantha et al. (2022), these socio-culturally configured gender roles perpetuate gender stereotypes. If one gender group is seen to be overstepping into other groups' turf, negative reception is inevitable. Since leadership positions have traditionally been occupied by men (Eagly & Karau, 2002), and in the postcolonial era more women are gradually accessing these positions, the challenges they encounter can therefore be attributed to gender stereotypes and the patriarchal nature of Basotho. That is, female principals suffer prejudice due to the preconceived belief that they are incompetent to assume more agentic functions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Sczesny, 2019).

Despite living in modern societies, women still suffer from discrimination because the stakeholders persistently attribute leadership roles to males without necessarily understanding the requirements and functions of the principal's office (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Just like in the ancient times, in the postcolonial era female leaders are still inhibited to perform their duties due to the entrenched gender-discriminatory ideologies. With the above in mind, the inference made in this chapter is that the challenges confronting female principals in postcolonial Lesotho stem from the perception that, they are the wrongful occupants of the school's administration office. Consequently, female school principals are not only seen as violating the gender-ascribed roles but also acting against the engrained community structures. The challenges they encounter could be attributed to the fact that women in the postcolonial era are constantly shifting boundaries and occupying masculine roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

15.4 Duties of School Principals

According to Kuswemi et al. (2020), schools are formal educational institutions that are aimed at providing learners with knowledge, skills and acceptable attitudes. Schools are led by principals who according to Tlali and Matete (2021) are at the apex of school administration. School principals play a vital role towards achieving school objectives (Kuswemi et al., 2020). The position of the school head, whether occupied by male or female, necessitates certain competencies. It requires a leader who can influence subordinates to perform in a desired manner to enable the attainment of school aspirations (Kuswemi et al., 2020; Shava et al., 2019). However, they do not have absolute powers as they serve as the trustees of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). Amongst their duties, they are expected to be chief executive officers who mainly champion effective teaching and learning so that national and school goals could be attained (Sepiriti, 2023).

Since the school principal's roles have evolved overtime and have become diverse and complex (Hamid et al., 2016), principals are constantly working under pressure. They are continuously under great scrutiny from different stakeholders. For instance, they are expected to efficiently execute some of the postcolonial treaties and policies enacted and signed by the Government of Lesotho to strength its commitment to the provision of quality education that responds to the twenty-first-century demands. These policies and treaties include Child Protection Act of 2011, Child Friendly Standards, 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals, Curriculum and Assessment Policy of 2009, Child Friendly Schools. The above suggests that school principals irrespective of sex have a mammoth task of impacting the school efficacy and the livelihoods of learners by setting the tone and specific ethos aimed at informing teaching and learning activities (Hamid, et al., 2016; Kuswemi et al., 2020; Maponya, 2020; Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). Thus, the appointed school principal is expected to steer the school in a particular direction that will enable the entire school community to perform their roles for realisation of planned school efficacy.

15.5 Effects of Challenges on School Principal's Efficacy

According to Ratanya et al. (2019) leadership of social organisations such as the schools is often approached from the patriarchal stance. The eligibility of who should lead is continually contested and laced to socio-cultural patriarchy (Dzimiri & Jita, 2022; Kuswemi et al., 2020; Priyashantha et al., 2022; Shava et al., 2019). The question of who is most suitable to lead has impacted how female leaders are viewed. Due to the openness of schools, Ndebele (2018) posits that gender stereotypes manifest themselves easily in schools. Thus, the preconceived socio-cultural belief that women are inferior to men and that they cannot sufficiently lead schools still prevails even in the postcolonial era (Kuswemi et al., 2020; Ndebele, 2018). This primeval and discriminatory stance towards school leadership remains a thorny issue that has amplified the challenges confronting female school principals (Dzimiri & Jita, 2022; Kuswemi et al., 2020).

The ingrained gender-biased stance sees males as only worthy and rightful occupants of leadership positions without necessarily vetting their competencies. Female are generally considered unfit to lead schools (Ndebele, 2018), This perception negatively affects female principals' efficacy and the school's ability to attain in goals (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Schmidt & Mestry, 2015). Thus, instead of focusing on improving teaching and learning activities, they tend to be preoccupied with proofing their value and fighting the pre-colonial gender stereotypes; while neglecting important duties to effect school ambition (Djan & Gordon, 2020; Schmidt & Mestry, 2015).

15.6 Methodology

Narrative inquiry was adopted as an underpinning paradigm for this chapter. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to obtain and analyse stories from those affected by the problem. Hence it was considered suitable for exploring the stories of female principals in Lesotho in order to understand their work-related challenges and their copying mechanisms (Dhungana, 2021: Lefoka & Tlali, 2021; Ramos-Holguin & Rallón, 2020). Since narrative inquiry is anchored by the collaborative partnership between the researchers and the participants, it empowered the participating principals to freely narrate their lived stories (Butina, 2015; Ramos-Holguin & Rallón, 2020). These unique stories

became the raw data that was analysed and interpreted; and conclusions were drawn (Butina, 2015). Thus, narrative inquiry helped us to gain insight into the prejudices Lesotho female principals endure in postcolonial era. To enable the participants to share their stories without restrictions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight (8) conveniently selected female principals. The interviews enabled follow-up questions and probing with the aim of obtaining in-depth stories (Neiuwenhuis, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

To observe the ethical issues, consent was obtained from the participants after being informed about the research aim; and were made aware of their liberty to opt in or out. For anonymity and confidentiality purposes, the participants were allocated pseudonyms to disguise their identity. The pseudonyms FP1 to FP8 were adopted in order to protect the participants' identity.

15.7 The Challenges

The challenges faced by the Lesotho female principals are presented in four themes, namely: power struggle, learner indiscipline, feeling inferior and sexual harassment.

Power Struggle

According to the findings, the Lesotho female principals continue to battle with the pre-colonial patriarchal position that perceives men as the only gender that is fit to lead. In their own words, FP1stated that the Basotho *culture seems to dictate that men are the only ones who are supposed to lead. Female principals are confronted with prejudice which leads to male teachers' insubordination* (FP2). This view was echoed by FP3 who illustrated that *Leading males is one of the most daunting challenges* [she] *has ever had to endure since* [her] *appointment…they do not listen to* [her] ….

The issue of power struggle was further reiterated by FP4 who divulged that *there is a lot of power struggle in schools. That is expressed in the way male teachers undermine female leadership…it seems colleagues do not believe in women efficiency. There is no support from the school board, male teachers, parents and the community.* FP4 further voiced that *male teachers sabotage*

female principals; they do not take orders. This position was underscored by FP6 who stated that *the community undermines female principals' leadership abilities as a result; they do not consider their decisions to be accurate.* FP7 added that men *always have reservations towards supporting female principals.* The participants unanimously agreed that the eminent power struggle is underpinned by the belief that, it is a male's birth right to be appointed into leadership positions.

The foregoing findings suggest that the power struggle and the related conflict are perpetuated by some male teachers and members of the community who defy female leadership.

Learners' Indiscipline

The participants revealed that the use of illicit drugs and prevalence of gangsterism amongst learners make it difficult for female principals to uphold discipline since they are afraid of being attacked. FP1 indicated that as female principals they are *constantly fighting learners' ill-discipline such as the use of drugs.* According to FP1 this behaviour *poses a threat to school livelihood and unfortunately we are not capacitated to deal with it.* On this issue, FP7 added that *schools have become a breeding group for gangsterism (manomoro).* Despite the fact that *this emerging behaviour threatens the very basic principle of safe school environment…* The female principals confessed their hands are tight since they *fear to reprimand these learners.*

The above findings suggest that some female principals are faced with serious learner indiscipline which negatively affects the schools' core business of improving instructional activities.

Feeling Inferior

The findings revealed that another challenge that is faced by some of the Lesotho female principals stems from their lack of confidence. Some of the participants admitted that female principals *are always undermined because some of* [them] *feel inferior and doubt* [their] *competencies* (FP3). Some divulged that they often look unto themselves *with disapproval…*which makes them see themselves *as incapable of bringing about needed change* (added FP5). This view was further supported by FP8 who indicted that female principals *tend to sabotage themselves by displaying lack of confidence*

and sometimes they are held at ransom by fear of the challenges. From the foregoing findings, it can be noted that some of the difficulties confronting female principals emanate from various factors including not believing in themselves.

Sexual Harassment by an Education Officer

Sexual harassment is one of the challenges confronting female school principals in Lesotho. FP2 divulged that she got a sexual demand from one education officer. According to FP2 the sexual demand was made in exchange for the service she required from the education office. The officer suggested that she should be intimate with him so that he could quickly process some of the urgent documents she had submitted to his office. He said if she did not agree, *the documents would not be prioritised*. When she refused, indeed the processing was delayed. This is evidence of not only an illegal matter and violation of women's rights, but it further demonstrates some worrying gender-based injustices and disrespect which some of the female principals' encounter.

15.8 The Coping Mechanisms

Having to deal with the challenges narrated above, the female principals have had to cope one way or the other. Some of their copying mechanisms for the above outlined challenges are as follows:

Handling the Power Struggle

The participants revealed that they usually resort to training workshops, community awareness campaigns and the enforcement of the educational laws and policies in order to curb the power struggle challenge.

Training Workshops

Some participants indicated that they have organised sensitisation workshops for teachers and some members of the community in order to mitigate the power struggle in schools. For example, FP3 indicated that she has had to *organise some capacity building workshops for the teachers focusing mainly on advancing ethical conduct and team work.*

Community Awareness Campaign

The participants also observed that *most of the challenges prevalent in the schools are caused by the social patriarchal beliefs*, [they] *resorted to instituting public awareness campaigns aimed at alerting stakeholders about the dangers of this dated stance and how it could be curbed to ensure a society that is free of gender stereotypes and discrimination*.

According to the participants, training workshops and community awareness campaigns have been useful in empowering them with various postcolonial survival competencies including tolerance and teamwork. These have enabled them to gradually challenge the status quo and shift the gender dynamics in their schools and the surrounding communities.

Enforcement of Educational Laws

The participants further highlighted that in order to cope with prejudice that hinders female principals to sufficiently execute their tasks, they have had to apply the educational laws and policies while dealing with male teacher insubordination. *FP4 shared that the issue of conduct is guided by the Codes of Good Practices of 2011 and as a principal, she has had to take many to task and I am yet to discipline many*. FP4 emphasised that she always sticks *to the guidelines governing teacher conduct and constantly applies them to whoever is defiant*. According to this participant, it is *a constant battle to deal with this and one needs to ensure consistency in maintaining order and discipline*.

FP8 added that she has noted that male *insubordination is common in schools but should not be tolerated*. FP8 further pointed out that she consistently guides herself w*ith the Codes of Good Practice of 2011, and takes action concerning any infractions without waiting for them to get out of hand*. From these findings, it could be noted that some male teachers are notorious for undermining female leadership. Hence, the participants indicated that prompt and firm application of the educational laws has been helpful. The above revelation points out that if female principals could constantly apply the enacted legal tools, they could gradually debunk some gender stereotypes.

Mitigating Learners' Indiscipline

In order to mitigate the challenge of learners' indiscipline participants' copying mechanisms were classified into continuous spot-checking and the involvement of law enforcement personnel.

Continuous Spot-checking and Involving of Law Enforcement Personnel

The participants revealed that besides spot-checking learners' belongings, they have sought for intervention from various stakeholders including law enforcement agencies and other members of the community to sensitise learners on the dangers of drug use. FP1 reported that on some occasions she has had to *involve some law enforcement personnel that reside nearby.* The same strategy was echoed by FP5 who indicated that on several occasions, she had to engage some retired and some active prominent persons to talk to the learners about the importance of obeying rules.

The above findings illustrate that the participants have identified and applied strategies which make perpetrators to refrain from bringing in the illicit substances into schools. However, further measures are needed in creating and sustaining a safe school environment.

Dealing with Inferiority

The participants indicated that in order to cope with the challenge of inferiority, they have had to use mechanisms that include training and peer support.

Training

Some participants revealed they have enrolled into some training programmes whereby the experts in the field induct them on essential skills in order to boost their confidence and expertise while carrying out their headship duties. In this regard, FP5 reported that *they have been engaging experts, once every two quarters of the year, who continuously induct* [them] *on principles of good school leadership*. In addition, FP8 shared that she *enrolled with one university in the country, on part-time basis so that she could enhance* [her] *leadership skills.*

Peer Support Initiatives

Some participants added that they sought help from other female principals by instituting support groups whereby they share their experiences and suggest possible short- or long-term empowerment strategies for female principals. FP2 pointed out that they *have started a forum where we share our daily experiences.* [They] *talk about the challenges encountered and suggest possible mitigating strategies.*

15.9 Discussion

The findings showed that the female secondary school principals in Lesotho experience many challenges. These include power struggle, learners' indiscipline, feeling inferior and sexual harassment. The narratives point to the deep-rooted pre-colonial and colonial discrimination patriarchal stereotypes that permeate the daily experiences of these principals. The ill-treatment clearly communicates the resentment male teachers in particular and other members of the wider community have towards female leadership. It is thus crucial to draw from the postcolonial critique and critical theory in order to shift these gender dynamics and restore social justice (Gemma, 2018; Mahmound et al., 2018; Heleta, 2018; Zembylas, 2018; Tlali, 2023). These ingrained gender dynamics pose challenges for the female principals to function comfortably in this historically masculine leadership position (Djan & Gordon, 2020; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Schmidt & Mestry, 2015).

Despite the challenges, the findings illustrated that the female principals have not given up. Thus, they are striving and shifting the aforementioned gender dynamics by adopting coping and mitigation to curb their challenges. The strategies include: training workshops, community awareness campaign, law enforcement, peer support initiatives, continuous spot-checking of learners' belongings and involving the law enforcement personnel and the community. While these strategies have helped them survive, this chapter recommends that the different stakeholders within the Basotho nation should find sustainable solutions regarding the historically entrenched patriarchy, colonial, racial and gender discrimination, stereotypes and the related prejudices (Leibowitz et al., 2015; Krauss, 2017; Maruma, 2017). This could enable every citizen, despite their gender to contribute towards national development and progression in the postcolonial times.

15.10 Conclusion

The chapter revealed that the majority of the challenges confronting Lesotho female school principals are, to a larger extent, promoted by the preconceived colonial race and gender discrimination and patriarchal gender stereotypes. These stereotypes do indeed undermine women leadership and stifle their authority. There is a need to continuously shift the gender dynamics in postcolonial Lesotho and Africa with a view to move from *History to Herstory*. Thus, all the stakeholders should reflect on, and challenge this nemesis that threatens the basic principles of social justice and equality.

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CHAPTER 16

Women and the World of Science: Challenges and Prospects in Post-Colonial Lesotho Post-secondary Education

Itumeleng Mokhele

16.1 Introduction

In post-colonial Southern Africa, women in the world of science rewrote the story of women scientists by making their presence felt in the field that history demarcated as male domain. As education became accessible to girls in the 1960s, they did not let the pre-colonial and the colonial mind-set of restraining females within the households and the reproductive roles deter them from transcending the societal boundaries that were meant to stifle their potential. Statements driven by biological reasoning such as women are more "naturally suited to be carers" are reportedly amongst those that marginalise women (Council of Europe, 2023). Females who qualified for higher education enrolled in courses in the field of science which included pharmacy, teaching of science, medicines and many others

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(Huyer, 2015). Although it was not common to have women in these fields, they continued to present themselves amongst those who graduated from institutions of higher learning in this area while they also joined the working force in this field. The pre-colonial era revolved around the indigenous knowledge which also echoed the male voice. Bruchac (2014) contends that indigenous peoples around the world preserved distinctive understanding rooted in cultural experience that guides relations with other human and non-human beings in specific ecosystems. It is observed that women engaging in witchcraft are not considered as scientists yet their performances appear to be of high scientific order, Moreover, they were not empowered to undertake some of their indigenous scientific undertakings openly as they were criticised by their male counterparts. The pre-colonial women scientists refrained from openly practising their trade as they were discouraged by the then society as their scientific approach is unpopular in communities where such women lived. However, they did not succumb to such critiques as they continued to deliver midwifery services in their homes, mix herbs and other indigenous health remedies to alleviate illnesses while continuing to exercise the high order skills of nursing the elderly and observing the hygiene measures in the context of what they had (Matŝela, 1979). In as much as their practice was rudimentary, they were able to deliver what the conventional scientists of the modern Lesotho and Southern African perform.

16.2 Notion of Women Scientists

There are male and female scientists who operate in their various work domains. Prozesky and Mouton (2019, p. 1) define scientists "*as individuals who dedicate at least a portion of their professional activity to research*". They further posit that as members of the scientific community, they communicate their results and findings primarily through peer-reviewed journal publication to their peers. The Britannica (2023) defines a scientist as a person trained in science, whose practice and work involves solving scientific problem. However, the preceding definition is narrow given the broadness of the scientific domain. For the Science Council (2023), a scientist is someone who systematically gathers and uses research and evidence to make and to test hypotheses in order to gain and share understanding and knowledge. The first definition only looks at the term "scientist" from the academic and scholarly point of view while engineers, biologists and other scientists do not necessarily share their results and findings through journals as not all research is intended for publication but

for institutional functions. While the last two definitions involve the practical and hands-on aspects of a scientist, they suffice to inform the present chapter in which the term women scientists is used to refer to female actors directly and indirectly involved in the areas of work that deals with animals, plants, chemicals, built, natural physical environments, non-natural physical environments and human beings with the view of producing consumable goods as well as knowledge required to solve problems in each domain.

16.3 Historical Background of Women Scientists in Lesotho

In as much as agricultural-related scientific knowledge was rarely regarded as science in the past, this is the domain that has been dominated by women. Amenyah and Puplambu (2013) indicate that women constitute an influential segment of the human resource package in African agriculture. According to them, women participation in agriculture in Lesotho, Mozambique and Sierra Leone is estimated around 60%. However, despite the recognition of the role of women in agriculture, they are largely viewed as labourers, as no reference is made to specific roles that they play in this sector, whether they participate as engineers, technicians or researchers. Amenyan and Puplampu's study is silent about specific roles played by women. Furthermore, Mokhehle and Khala (1976) attest to women and their close relationship to agriculture as it indicates that the mother would take her hoe and go to work in the field once she has fed her family. It seems like most of the historical research about the women in agriculture was done without particular consideration to specific scientific roles played by women in this domain such that challenges and opportunities encountered could be highlighted.

16.4 Women in Various Scientific Domains

In various scientific domains women are considered as mere labourers. While such a view may be considered as a norm to their male counterparts, it could actually present a challenge to women in those particular areas of science. One such area is agriculture as a branch of science. Makhwana et al. (2020) state that between 60 to 90 per cent of women engage in agricultural production activities while a few participate in science education which constitutes one of the high-paying fields. Despite the aforementioned portrayal of women in post-colonial Lesotho, women are breaking the patriarchal barriers to join the world of science. This could be

witnessed through some joint initiatives such as the #codelikeagirl programme launched in the country on 17 September 2021 (https://www.vodacom/news-article.php?articleID=7696) which is a project about empowering girls and women in the field of science and technology. However, Prozesky and Mouton (2019) warn that empirical knowledge of the career challenges that confront African scientists and women in particular remains critical to achieving future success in the science domain within the continent. While the articulated warning is generic to African countries, Lesotho is not an exception as it is faced by similar dilemma as its sister countries across the continent with regard to women scientists in the post-colonial era. The challenges and prospects for Basotho women in science are explored through a narrative inquiry which seeks to establish their position in the world of science in the post-colonial Lesotho.

16.5 Challenges of Women in Science in Lesotho

Women scientists in Lesotho are confronted with a number of challenges which include, among others, lack of recognition and acknowledgement for their contribution in various fields of science. Irrespective of their qualifications in the science domain, they are regarded as ordinary women with little to no scientific knowledge. This has been underlined in a number of studies conducted in Africa in which Lesotho was part of such studies. For instance, Amenyah and Puplambu (2013) when referring to women in agriculture assert that "women constitute one vital human resource in African agriculture". Such statement has some undermining elements as women in this scientific domain are not recognised beyond being a human resource. Their scientific contribution is overlooked as the scientific element of their profession is overshadowed.

In Prozesky and Mouton's view (2019), work-family balance is seen as one of the challenges that affect women's careers in the scientific domain. They struggle to spread themselves across the two where the demands of the work affect their results in the family. Moreover, they identified lack of mentoring as another challenge for women. They argue that women refrain from trainings that require them to be away from home on several occasions.

In addition, the reproductive responsibility of women presents another challenge for them. Huyer (2015, p. 98) calls the mentioned challenge the "maternal wall". Williams (2004) refers to the maternal wall as the bias triggered when women get pregnant as the condition typically attracts negative competence assumptions. Due to long leaves such as maternity leave,

Halpert et al. (1993) show that performance reviews of female managers dropped after pregnancy. Moreover, Williams (2004) argues that leaves taken by women or being absent from work is attributed to plummeting performance. The preceding stipulation shows biasness as women's counterparts in the scientific world take leaves when they wish to and there is no statement that highlights how that is affecting their job performance.

Science as a domain can be categorised into non-mathematics science and intensive mathematics science. According to Ceci et al. (2014, p. 75) women are underrepresented in college majors and university programmes that are most mathematically intensive which include inter alia geoscience, engineering, economics, mathematics and computer science. They argue that this challenge emanates from pre-college factors and the subsequent likelihood of majoring in these fields.

16.6 Opportunities for Basotho Women in Science

Basotho women have the opportunity to innovate (Rakotsoane, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the woman scientists from the National University of Lesotho led a team of other scientists from the institution in the production of the COVID-19 remedy using the indigenous plants (SABC NEWS, 2021). Positive feedback on the testing of the plants was announced on local radio stations and from some in the neighbouring Republic of South Africa. "Lesotho makes strides towards possible COVID-19 treatment" states:

> *Two tests were done to test the effectiveness of the two indigenous plant species against coronavirus. Results released by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) confirmed that extracts of the two indigenous plant species from Lesotho are active against two COVID-19 strains.* (2021)

In post-colonial Lesotho, women scientists are steering the wheel of scientific knowledge generation, while also using science to bring solutions to the health sector. Reliance on the indigenous knowledge also forms the basis of the prowess of women scientists. For instance, according to Rakotsoane (2020), Dr Lerato Seleteng Kose told the National Emergency Command Centre (NECC) that traditional herb, "lengana" scientifically known as Artemisia afra (African Worm Wood) has been used by Basotho for generations to treat respiratory tract infections such as colds, coughs, influenza, asthma and tuberculosis. As a result, Dr Seleteng Kose put the

herb to trial in an attempt to bring solution to the COVID-19 pandemic which was ravaging not only the Basotho, but people across the globe.

While Prozesky and Mouton argue (2019) that women have been more successful raising research funding in the health sciences, social sciences and humanities, that is not the case for all countries as research fundings are country specific. In as much as Lesotho is among the 30 African countries covered in their study, it is not easy to segregate data as it has been aggregated and most of the time, general. In that way, no specific funding information was presented per country. It is therefore difficulty to say women from such countries received research funding at a particular period.

However, there is a rise in female graduates in scientific fields. Huyer (2015) in the UNESCO Report shows that Lesotho appeared in the second position of the top four countries for women's representation in science. It is further highlighted that women graduates are part of the small cohort as they make up 54% of Lesotho's 47% tertiary graduates in science. According to the statistics revealed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, August 2015 in the UNESCO Report (2015, p. 92), it is indicated that in the year 2013, in Lesotho female graduates' representation in four selected scientific fields were as follows: Science = 54.5%, Engineering = 27.5%, Agriculture = 45.7% and Health and Welfare = 78.8%.

According to Huyer (2015, p. 86), between 2002 and 2011, Lesotho dropped significantly out of a category of countries that were making strides in women representation in the field of science as it plummeted from 76% to 30%. Despite the blurry picture, the 2013 data show some positive improvements on the sampled fields. On other scientific domain such as telecommunications and software development, private sector in Lesotho with support from other international organisations and agencies present in the country are also rewriting her story in the scientific domain. The celebration of the United NatioonsInternational Day of Women and Girls in Science-Codepool (2022), through the Lesotho-based Girls Coding Academy showcased the use of Microsoft Power BI in developing themed data, dashboards, reports and publishing data articles on Medium and Githuils marks another important milestone of Basotho women in Science through the constant presence in overarching scientific developments (https://www.nulresearchandinnovations.co.ls). Similar initiatives like code like a girl like a girl highlights the unprecedented footing of upcoming generation of women in science (Media Releases, 2021). Moreover, the Science, Technology and Innovation Review and Technology Needs Assessment for Lesotho (2022, p. 62) recommends

the government to develop human capital for STEM fields and attract young people to pursue research career paths and innovation-based on entrepreneurship with the aim of attracting girls to STEM subjects.

16.7 Gender Gap in the Scientific World

Despite political endeavours to close the gender gap in the scientific world, Makhwana et al. (2020) maintain that gender disparities in the Science Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) remain acute. The Vodacom Human Resource Director, Mashigo underlines the alarming gap in STEM (https://www.vodacom/news-article.php?articleID=7696). He argues that by teaching girls how to code, they are essentially sensitising them to sequential thinking around problem solving, stimulating their creativity and design (Mzekandaba, 2022). While most literature about women in science careers presents the prevailing misrepresentation of women as gender related, Ceci et al. (2014) find it to be contradictory because their findings revealed that women and men fare equally. What they have established through their monograph is that women are underrepresented in college majors, graduate school programmes and the professoriate in the scientific field that are mathematically intensive. Their argument is supported by scientific challenge called hackathon presented to both male and female Basotho scientists where out of 113 participants, female representation was 8 while men was 105 from different institutions of higher learning and Information and Technology (ICT) professionals in the country (UNDP, 2020). Lastly, Ceci et al argue that although gender discrimination was an important cause of women's misrepresentation in scientific academic careers in the past, the claim has continued to be invoked after it has ceased to be a valid cause for women underrepresentation in maths intensive scientific domains. While their argument partially holds for Lesotho, in the context of the present chapter, the theory of Stiwanism is adopted due to prevalent bias towards women in the scientific work domains.

16.8 Theory of Stiwanism

The proponent of the theory, Ogundipe-Leslie (2020) coined the concept from the acronym STIWA-Social Transformations in Africa Including Women to address colonial and neo-colonial structures that oppress women (Oluwanowo, 2021). The theory argues that the struggles of

African women emanate from colonial and neo-colonial structures that often place men at the peak of social stratification. This has not only internalised the patriarchal system in African women, but it has also promoted structures that subjugate them and tyrannise them to counter these institutional structures. This theory underpins the current chapter as it interrogates challenges and prospects of women scientists in the scientific work domain as structures in lieu make it difficult for women to attain upward mobility on the basis of the biological responsibilities such as conceiving and judgement free right to leave for attending family-related matters. On the other hand, African men continue to enjoy social structures that oppress women in the post-colonial era as their leaves are rarely subjected to similar scrutiny that their counterparts receive.

16.9 Methodology

The chapter adapts a qualitative approach and narrative research is undertaken where the narrative guide was used as a data collection tool. Schurink et al. (2021) define narrative research as the type of investigation that involves making meaning of stories told by participants. The narrative guide titled "Beginning of her journey in the field of science" consisting of following rubriques: Please state the year when you started your studies in the field of science; the discipline studied for; number of women in your class then; the challenges that you encountered as a woman and how you overcame them was sent to four women scientists in order to collect stories of their journeys in the scientific domain. One statement and two questions were presented in the guide as a compass for directing the narrative.

(i) From your point of view, please describe how women claimed their space in the scientific domain in Lesotho.
(ii) In your opinion, what are the prospects of women in science in the post-colonial Lesotho?
(iii) What are the challenges facing women in science today in Lesotho?

The narrative guide also included a clause requesting permission to use participant's real names as the researcher felt that this is an important element in the rewriting of history as their stories will always carry their

names. Purposive sampling of participants was done as the researcher targeted women science teachers/facilitators/lecturers in both secondary and institutions of higher learning as their context offers them the platform to explore the world of science. Only two narratives were returned and one-woman scientist granted permission for the use of her name. Content analysis of the narratives was carried out. It is important to note that no editing was done on women's stories. They are presented as they have been written by narrators.

Narratives of Two Women Scientists

Narrative 1

Beginning of Ms Relebohile's journey in the field of science.

My journey in science started when I was so little, around age 9. I was curious on local manufacturing. I wondered why everything was made in China. In high school, I happened to major in Maths and Science as opposed to majoring in commercial subjects. I did not choose to major in Science and Maths but in my school then, when you excelled in all subjects they channelled you into sciences. How I now wish I could have majored in commercial subjects (laughs). In 1999 I enrolled into a Bachelor of Science Programme (BSc) majoring in Biology and Chemistry. I was actually aspiring to become a Medical Doctor. I can't quite remember how many women we were but we outnumbered the males. My challenges in the field of science were mainly on limitation of career choice. After you graduate, you could either further your studies to become a Medical Doctor or a Science Teacher. My dream on becoming a Medical Doctor failed after so many doors closing at my face. I had to admit that was not my calling. I then settled for teaching, which is where I still am even today, and have actually fallen in love with it. However, my curiosity in learning why science is not turned into business here in Lesotho still continued.

My interest in merging science and business became the challenge to solve into fruition. There were no mentors, no hubs like we have

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these days. People could not understand my thinking and they kept telling me that I am too ambitious. In 2014 I attended an Entrepreneurship Workshop for Scientists and Engineers that was held in Durban. That was the beginning of my new science and business career. Today I make jewellery using Chemistry, one of the fields in science and it is a very fulfilling journey. I can now boldly help other young people on how they can use their passion or curiosity to earn a fortune. And for that, I wrote a book and called it *"Toning Your Talent"*.

The challenges I faced as a woman are the pressures from the society. I delayed getting married and yes the pressure was tangible. And when I finally got married it was to a wrong guy. What do I mean by a wrong guy? From the onset there was no compatibility. But the feeling of being lonely was consuming me. Then I got children, and my second born came in the middle of my Master's degree. It is tough mixing school with other businesses like being a nursing mother. I struggled to cope since I was far from home, alone with the kids. This caused me to end up finishing my master's degree in 5 years instead of 2. I think I only overcame this problem by tolerance alone.

When I thought I was finally done with school, boom divorce came. I was not emotionally drowning, because I had detached from the guy emotionally almost 4 years back. However, the trauma of seeking help at Children's Court for a husband to support his kids, only to get bullied by the Magistrates (who were women too) left me daunted. I made up my mind that it's better to raise my kids without expecting any help from an irresponsible father, and my life was balanced by that decision.

Resilience is a characteristic of any woman that you will find successful in the scientific domain in Lesotho.

We aspire to take managerial positions, but most of us are lacking in leadership skills. Women in Science still need training in soft skills before they can lead people. The greatest challenge is emotional intelligence and the fear of being outcompeted.

What are the challenges facing women in science today in Lesotho?

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Boldness. Most women in Science, have ambitions but we are living in a hostile environment. We aspire to develop our communities but we are not bold enough to face the odds. Perhaps we get discouraged from trying to effect changes in the world that resists change. Then we succumb and let things remain as they are.

Narrative 2

I started my first year in the year 1989/1990. As a woman I felt that the atmosphere was very welcoming. It was until I met my course coordinator after realising that my admission was now DipsciEd instead of Bsced. I qualified for the degree program from COSC results. Again, the same results were used to apply for NMDS. Above that I had a bridging course. Terms for the course were 1 help people who do not qualify to get into varsity due to having a noncredit score in English or 2. A student choice was that they could leave or stay if their results were satisfactory. My results gave me a lower entry but I didn't use those results to apply. I tried in vain to convince him otherwise. I ended up going back home to tell my mother who had attained education up to Standard 6 (lower level of education as anyone who has this level is not considered educated) that I would rather stay at home than do a diploma. She convinced me that half a loaf is better than no bread. I went back a week later very depressed but I had to please her. Mind you the fellow didn't give me an alternative to change the course. Then as an education student there was Sci Ed course offered as support to the Bsc. This course would be attended if there were problems with the science courses. Thus, most of us did not attend them. At the end they appeared in our transcripts. Physics major was where there were few females. The few that got into the class were made to feel like they don't belong.

Back to my story 2nd year I was taught by the course coordinator I met at first year. I struggled to the extent that I had to supplement. Fast forward I graduated with credit. Then to go into Bsced a student had to wait years if he didn't have a distinction. A pass was the end of their education immediately after these changed. The students with pass were to wait for 2 yrs. I applied and got admission but a lecturer in science education came to my workplace to say it was a mistake. There was nothing written at all. This very person was

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going to be my Sciedu lecture. I went to consult with my Geography lecturer amongst them was a member of the Senate. The gentlemen all said that she has a vendetta and since I was to be taught by her, my future was blocked so they advised me to reapply the next year. The member of Senate was to follow my application.

The challenge was the younger teaching assistants who would sometimes state that Sci is not for females. At 4th year one of the Sci lecturers did not see it fit to teach Ed students that particular course since he considered it superior to classroom knowledge. The biggest challenge was attendance in education course. Those are very big groups and they had to be taught outside normal hours i. e. Lunch or after 5 p.m. There was this lecturer who would say

"Batho ba science you think you are special?" So, we attended it like shepherds. Some months we went for tests only. As you can see the challenges were very minimal and not gender based.

16.10 Challenges Drawn from the Narratives

In this part, the chapter reveals the challenges that have been drawn from the two narratives and explore them in-depth in view of reimaging and reimagining the challenges and prospects of women in science in post-colonial Lesotho.

Lack of Mentorship

Poor mentoring is identified as one of the challenges facing women in science (Prozesky and Mouton 2019). The two narratives show that this challenge appears at two levels of the scientific world. First, at the entry point where the programme coordinator denied the participant admission into a degree programme while she has upgraded her results to qualify for the programme. She was forced to begin her journey in the scientific discipline at the diploma level. With adequate mentoring from secondary level, the participant could have been informed about required entry level and what to do after upgrading results in cases where one did not qualify in the first instance. In this instance, this participant saw herself forced to return home disappointed, frustrated to share her experience with her mother, who did not understand much due to little education received

then. The subjugation of women was continuing in the early years of the pre-colonial era within some institutions of higher learning in the country as the narrator began her journey in the 1980s.

The second level is also detected at the post degree level where the second participant wished to pursue her master's degree such that she can be a doctor. Similarly, to the experience of the first participant, she was stuck as there were no mentorship programmes for women in science.

Interestingly, both women remained resilient as they withstood the test of time and did not give up on their scientific ambition. This attribute which was manifested by women embarking in the scientific domain at the wake of the pre-colonial era remains relevant to the twenty-first-century women scientists as new challenges have emerged. Private companies such as Vodacom in partnership with UNDP and institutions of higher learning are working tirelessly to mentor young women to opt for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects. The move by the private sector is steadily addressing the issue of mentorship which was prevalent in the early to mid-years in pre-colonial Lesotho.

Unfair Treatment

Ceci et al. (2014) admit that in the past gender discrimination was an important cause of women's underrepresentation in scientific academic careers. In their school days, the participant who enrolled in science education highlighted that the Physics lecturers were less welcoming to female students. While no specific incidences of gender discriminations were felt by the participant, the act of making female students unwelcome to the class itself presented a challenge to women who enrolled for this particular science subject because they could not enjoy the course as much as their male counterparts were doing. Not only could this have affected the performance in the subject, but some were likely to have been discouraged to continue their science education in Physics.

Unavailability of Science Hubs

The National University of Lesotho Innovation Hub was established in 2018 (NUL Innovation Hub). Absence of facilities like science hubs infringed on the scientific exploration of women scientists who sought to explore new scientific ideas. However, there has been a shift that is slowly addressing the deficit with the development of the science hub at the National University of Lesotho. Women are creative by nature. Therefore,

when they are in the scientific domain their creativity expands as they seek scientific solutions to various problems. In the early days of the pre-colonial era, finding local scientific solutions was rare. Women scientists demonstrated their scientific knowledge by using indigenous plants to find treatment to the COVID-19 pandemic which was ravaging the nations of the world. Women in science in post-colonial Lesotho have their share of challenges even though it is not exhaustive; the next paragraphs show prospects of women in science.

16.11 Prospects of Basotho Women in Science

Innovation and Creativity

In post-colonial Lesotho, women in science are driving innovation and creativity (Rakotsoane, 2020). One participant has shared her story of applying chemistry to make jewellery. This does not end only within the realm of science but a woman is applying science to adorn women through responding to the needs of the beauty industry while also demonstrating entrepreneurship skills. As the theory of STIWANISM emphasises social transformation that includes women to address structures that oppress them, the findings reveal a Mosotho woman who is applying science to transform the women in the beauty industry. In this way, scientific know-how of women is used to reimage and reimagine the place of women scientists and it is used by a local woman scientist and innovator to respond to the needs of local women. Moreover, another innovation driven by a Mosotho woman scientist rests in the making of the coronavirus treatment using indigenous plants.

Ascendancy to Leadership Positions

While it has been mentioned by one participant, women working in the scientific domain have demonstrated leadership abilities as change leaders (Rakotsoane, 2020). This needs to be seen also in the realms of managerial and leadership of scientific units and institutions as their leadership skills are undisputable. The team that was developing the coronavirus was led by a woman. The creation of jewellery using chemistry is led by a woman, the girl coding academy in Lesotho is a woman. There are women in other scientific domains who have leadership skills and who are steering the science driven solutions in their areas of operation which could not be

incorporated into the present chapter as it is outside its scope. With the preceding discoveries, the STIWANISM theory applies to this chapter as women are uprooting the practice of colonial and neo-colonial structures that regarded men as the only capable leaders.

16.12 Conclusion

Women in science in post-colonial Lesotho are persistently making their presence felt. They are leading innovation and seeking scientific solutions to health and industrial problems that require scientific solutions. Despite the challenge of being represented in leadership positions of institutions, mentorship of young girls by women and the private sector in STEM is on the increase, thus, bridging the mentorship gap that was experienced by women in science in the earlier days of post-colonial Lesotho. Prospects are also large for Basotho women in science as the country is seeking scientific solutions to various problems facing the country today. The narrative of women in science is quickly changing as the private sector is also promoting the enrolment of girls in science-related subjects while recent science policy frameworks embrace women not only as participants but as solution providers. The historic turn by Basotho women drives the rewriting of her story as she shares her experiences.

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